

IN PARADISE



BY CHARLES H. STRONG

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IN PARADISE

OR

THE STATE OF THE FAITHFUL DEAD

A Study from Scripture

ON

DEATH AND AFTER-DEATH

BY ✓

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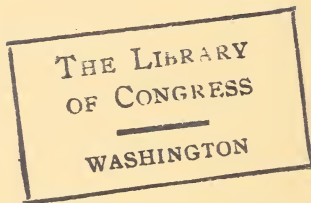
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To

THE CONGREGATION OF ST. JOHN'S
AMONG WHOM
HE HAS BEEN MINISTERING MANY YEARS
AND
IN WHOSE SICK-ROOMS AND BY WHOSE DEATH-BEDS
THESE THOUGHTS
UPON
THE STATE OF THE SAINTED DEAD
HAVE BEEN OFTEN SPOKEN
THIS LITTLE BOOK
AS ALREADY THEIRS
IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED
BY THEIR
FRIEND AND RECTOR

PREFATORY NOTE.

IN the exercise of that sweetest office of the Christian priesthood, the ministry of sympathy and consolation to the suffering, there are found in every parish these classes: (1) Many Christian people who, in spite of the depth of their trust and the sincerity of their penitence, do yet tremble at the great mystery of death; (2) Others who, for themselves and for their loved ones gone before, have not yet caught the clear horoscope of that future life, as drawn in the teaching of Christ and in the testimony of the Church. To give light upon this sweet and sacred subject, there are many large and learned volumes of our best scholars, but these are too erudite to meet the simple needs of everyday parochial life. It would seem that a little book which aims, in the simplest way, to gather up the Church's teaching upon Death, Paradise, the Resurrection and Heaven, might find some useful, though humble, place.

Upon such subjects it is evident that there cannot be, and should not be, any attempt at originality. Originality here would be irreverence, if not blasphemy. Quotations of thought are not acknowledged, as the thoughts are common to all writers upon these

Prefatory Note.

themes ; quotations of words are indicated in the usual way, but to avoid "the disfiguring distractions" of footnotes, the authors' names, as also the quotations from scripture—which are mostly taken from the revised version—are not given. There are three special obligations, however, which I wish to acknowledge : the exegesis of 1 Cor. 13:13 from the German commentators ; and from Dr. Goodhart the new and satisfactory interpretation of 1 Cor. 15:37-38, as also the interpretation of the vexed and vexing passage in Luke 20:34-37. Among other authors quoted are Dr. Plumptre, Canon Knox-Little, Dr. Luckock, Mr. Martineau and Mr. Gregg.

The mission of this little volume will be more than accomplished, if it serves to lift the cloud of sadness from any distressed heart, or helps any burdened soul to realize

"There is no death ! What seems so is transition ;
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life Elysian
Whose portals we call death !"

C. H. S.

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I.

THE POWER OF DEATH.

Heb. 2:14. "Him that had the power of death."

τὸν τὸ κράτος ἔχοντα τοῦ θανάτου

MUSIC has its lighter tones to express the cheerfulness, as also its deeper notes to express the pathos of human life ; but the genius of music is best interpreted through the harmony of its central register, a harmony blended of the melted tones of sorrow and of joy. In like manner Nature throws its softer colors upon the landscape at dawn and eventide, and its darker ones upon the scene in hours of storm and terror, but yet nature is best understood and realized through the blending of sunlight and shadow that move across field and forest through the greater portion of the day. And so it is with Death ; it is an

earnest and important question, in what tone and color should the Christian think death ? The shallow hopefulness which, with airy colors, paints the advent of the king of terrors as the cessation of all evil, thinking of the rest of Paradise, without the moral weight that entitles to that rest, can scarcely be the

The tone and color in which to think of death.

true Christian attitude. To desire rest from labor is well ; but to desire it simply because labor has been wearisome is vulgar and certainly un-Christlike. Christ has added a deeper solemnity to death, because He has so clearly revealed the greater sacredness of life, and of its duties. To part from the one with ease, and to enter the other with carelessness, cannot be the proper *tone*.

And yet certainly it cannot be the Christian attitude to stand in unwholesome dread of death. In Jesus Christ life is a new creation, and so is death. He has thrown the light of His example upon the article of dying because He has died, and upon the grave because His sacred body has rested within its mysterious portals. To us, with Christian faith to enlighten us, it should never be what death was to the Pagan, with his dim apprehension of the world of shadows. Homer, in the eleventh book of the *Odyssey*, and Virgil, in the sixth book of the *Æneid*, conducted their heroes to the unseen world ; but, at best, it was a shadowy world, or, at worst, a gloomy world, with the dark Stygian lake, with Phlegethon, the river of fire, and Lethe, the river of forgetfulness.

But the Elysian fields and Tartarus—the “isles of the blest” and the place of torment—obtained only a slight and mythic hold upon the popular mind. Belief in the future life had shrivelled into “a slight perhaps” in the days before the advent of Christ. The divine

Pagan
views of
death.

Plato, "who almost touched the gates of Paradise," gives the fairest rays of hope in the *Phædo* and the *Gorgias*, and his Socrates quits the world with almost a Christian hope upon his lips. Tacitus did not venture beyond his "*if*, indeed, there is any place for the spirits of the pious, *if*, as the wise imagine, the souls of the great are not extinguished with their bodies." Cicero expresses a hope, but stammeringly, like a modern agnostic: "If in this I am mistaken, because I believe the spirits of men to be immortal, sadly am I mistaken." Sallust writes that "Cæsar urged torture rather than death upon traitors, as death had lost its restraining force, men ceasing to look for anything after death." With these dim, intangible views of another life, it need not surprise us that men met death with horror and dread, or some few of the nobler sort, like Cato and Seneca, with the calm despair of stoicism. The former spent his last hours in thinking of the illustrious men of the past, and the latter, when Nero's messengers came to his old tutor, in composing some of the noblest passages of stoic philosophy. But to the great mass of men death was an unparalleled catastrophe—"simply this and nothing more."

Does some of this terrified spirit of a hopeless Paganism linger among us whose privilege it is to live in the climate of a better hope? It sometimes appears so when we see the dread with which many Christians look upon the article of dying, and the loss

of sustaining hope with which they regard the condition of their loved ones who have passed into the great mystery. We are recreant to our noblest her-

itage when we regard death in the light of merely natural and human feeling. By a miracle of love we are placed at a new point of view. If we believe the Scrip-
 The Chris-
 tian concep-
 tion of
 death.

tures—and this is written for those who do believe them heartily and earnestly—then both life and death, both the solemn joy of living and the saddening thought of dying, are to be regarded in the light of Christian revelation. Death is best studied under the register that has a harmony blended of joy and sadness; under a light woven of sunlight and shadow. In a word, “to die can never, without an enthusiasm which does violence to reason and little credit to the heart, be an act of *transport*; so low as an act of *submission* it need not sink, for this would imply that the change from the present to the future is for evil. It is most fitly met in the spirit of *trust*—an unbroken belief that it is for the better, but a feeling of reluctance, which we distrust and check, as though it were for the worse; a consciousness that if we chose for ourselves we should remain where we are, yet not a doubt of the greater wisdom and goodness of God’s choice that we should go.”

Woven, then, of mingled sunlight and shadow, let us look first at some of the shadows which haunt us when adverting to our own demise. Children of life

as we are, it is natural and proper that we should think more of life and its interests than of that which is only an incident and an interruption. Possessed by the stronger force, we do but follow the line of nature when we refuse to spend life in meditation upon the tomb. That is only the rhapsody of morbid theology which teaches us "the world is a waste, life a burden, and all human affections snares of sin—that in all earnest moments of reflection we should sigh for the hour which shall rescue us from mortality." Reacting from such unreal mysticism the human heart has vindicated its right to think sweetly of this earth, which is the arena of its struggle and the theatre of its triumph, and has often put behind it the thought of death. But a true philosophy always takes into recognition every fact, and the fact that we must die is as sure and certain as the fact that we are living. Therefore it is impossible for an honest mind to abandon *all* speculation upon a fact that so surely fronts us, although the hour of its advent is unknown. We know the fairest things upon which we gaze and around which our hearts cling are proscribed by the hand of fate, as well as by the pen of the Apostle, as "temporary." It is the part of common sense sometimes to think of death. It comes upon others—we have often seen the quiet ceremony of its approach ; it will, and must surely, come upon us. Its ways of approach are as various as the characters of the men

The certainty of death.

it strikes, but *that* is little ; *the fact is everything*. With the mass of our race it gently leads them down the hill of life into the valley of the shadows ; with some, and that a large number, it smiles over the spot where love has cradled them, and bears away the young life as too tender for the experience of a rough world ; with others it strikes them down in the prime of manhood, leaving the column broken, and the life incomplete. Some it watches through the era of a long sickness ; others it calls by a sudden and imperious volition ; some it sends forth to a martyr's crown, when duty, patriotism and conscience weigh life as cheap in the scales with honor ; others it waits for at the foot of the scaffold, when human society is vindicating the laws which secure its being. The ways of death are little important except as they are associated with honor or dishonor. To us, as a personal experience, it is absolutely unknown and unknowable, but *we shall soon know it better*. "In a world of infinite possibilities, and therefore of immeasurable uncertainties ; a world in which we feel at every dawn like travellers in a country unmapped, because hitherto unexplored ; in a world in which no set of circumstances is with *each* soul precisely the same ; in a world in which new landscapes, so to speak, are ever being unfolded before the astonished eyes ; in such a world it is no trifling matter of which it can be said, "*this* at least is certain : certainly we shall die." Of a fact so certain, amid a world of

change, it is surely well to think—to think how *we* shall meet death when *our* time comes ; to meditate beforehand upon the lights and shadows of this great event, and from Scripture to learn the true meaning of death.

Men dread death from anticipation of the pain connected with it. There is the dread

Reasons for the dread of death.

1. The pain connected with it.

that when the undying spirit leaves its familiar dwelling-place the separation is accompanied with bodily pain, as though the body clung tenaciously to its tenant and would be parted only by duress—a

pain all the keener because, perhaps, of the weakened power to express it. The horror of nightmare arises because the tongue seems tied and cannot speak ; let it but utter a sound and arouse the sleeper, when at once the ugly vision flees. Pain is, as we know, the impairment of function in an organ ; it is therefore thought that as disease marches on its victorious career, organ after organ becomes impaired, and pain is multiplied upon pain in the consciousness of the dying. Brave men who have often faced death at the cannon's mouth shudder at the slow wasting of disease ; and, most strange of all, the aged, in whom many a string is already cut between their immortal spirit and its wasted tenement, shrink from what is in store for them. But apart from saying that to be much concerned about the physical pain of an organization ceasing to be were an un-manly and un-Chris-

tian fear, the dread is not true in fact. Death is not the violent wrenching apart of body and soul, as it is commonly regarded, but rather is the gentle parting of clasped hands. By a loving Providence, the disease which increases the pain of death by impairment of function, diminishes the consciousness of it by the same impairment. As the angel of death approaches the climax of his work the mind becomes more unconscious of his presence and of his devastation, until at last, when his strange work is done, the mind departs, leaving upon the cold features a smile of benediction, as if the life-long friends—the spirit and its tabernacle—had parted in peace. Thus it is that we do not find in death itself that dread of death nor that fear of pain which we anticipate while living. Few are the death-beds where pain is felt, and there need be none, for science has accepted the creed that severe pain must be alleviated, and stands ready, like the soldier at the cross offering upon his spear the anasthesia of relief. It were better to refuse it, as did the Sufferer of Calvary, that we might be baptized with His baptism of fire, but if the spirit be not capable of so Christ-like an endurance it need not suffer when the hour comes. At most there is nothing in the *pain* of death to raise in any mind the fear of dying.

Men sometimes dread death because it is so great a mystery. It is the exchange of the known for the unknown; of the loved and familiar for the new and

strange. It is a law of nature that there must always be some apprehension about the unknown

2. The mystery of it; and mysterious, some dread of the great exchange of secret which has never been revealed by the known any traveller returning hither from its for the bourne. An old inhabitant of one of the unknown.

villages of Erin has been summoned to America by the claim of children and of kindred. In that village he has passed the best years of his life; over the blue waters of Killarney's lakes he has often rowed in boyhood; in that same cottage in the green valley he has grown from infancy to manhood, and now, with whitening locks and trembling limbs, he can no longer work, and the summons comes to cross the unknown sea. Friends and children are upon the other side, still it is years since he has seen them; they may have altered in the years which have elapsed since they parted from him; *here* all is so familiar and so dear—*there* everything is so strange, so new and so untried; shall we wonder that he shrinks from this new experience? Can we blame him that he prefers the attachments which bind him to his home? Can he leave those scenes endeared to him by many associations without a wrench, nay, without a dread of what awaits him upon the other side? This dread of the unknown and of parting with the present and the dear came to our Lord most keenly. As Martineau beautifully urges: "If Christ felt the cup to be bitter, and turned for a moment from the draught; if

He trembled that He should see no more the towers of Jerusalem, though to see them had drawn forth prophetic tears; if He sorrowed in spirit to bid adieu to the family of Bethany, though the tie was that of friendship and not of home; if He hid His head at parting in the bosom of the beloved disciple, though to Mary the mother, that disciple was needful still; if He had rather that the immortal spirits of the elder time should come to commune with Him under the familiar oaks of Tabor, than Himself be borne to them, He knew not whither; if the Mount of Olives, his favorite retreat of midnight prayer, and the shore of the Galilean Lake, witness to the musings and enterprises of His opening ministry, and the verdant slopes of Nazareth, sacred with the memories of early years, seem to gaze in upon His melted soul with a beseeching look that He would not go; may not we, without the reproach of impiety, feel that to depart is no light struggle, and cast a lingering glance at the friendly scene we quit?" Certainly this shrinking from the unknown and the untried testifies to the worth of our present natural affections, and may justly be permitted to our longing human heart; but still, there is no occasion of dread in this exchange of worlds. It is true that the world and scenery and environment to which we are summoned *are* unknown, but not all of it is unknown and unfamiliar. To us, if we would but earnestly believe it, a revelation has been given. Details of that future life are not known to us, and, by

the necessity of the case (and the necessity of the case is that we must be trained by the exercise of trust and faith, and not by the possession of sight and knowledge) *cannot* be made known to us. Still, enough has been revealed to indicate the spirit of that other life, and the spirit of Him who is its Lord ; if, therefore, we will mould our lives in the spirit of our Saviour, seek to have "the spirit of Christ, and to be, therefore, one of His," then the unknown will become to us the partly known, and Paradise will not be altogether the land of mystery. And it may also become the familiar and the dear. The heart goes where its treasures are. As the objects of earthly affection are taken from us we must allow reverent imagination to have its play ; the child is not where the white stone proclaims its resting-place ; it is not there, but risen where the angels are ; follow it with devout fancy, and say to the desponding heart, "See, there it is among the angels ; listen to the welcome voices ; look at it, within the arms which once so gladly took up little children and blessed them ; no sin will ever fleck its perfect purity ; it learns from the holiest of lips lessons which never man, nor woman either, could ever speak." In a word, cast into the unknown, as we are bidden to do, "every blessed remembrance, every high pursuit, every unanswered aspiration, every image pure and dear, and invest them with a divine and holy beauty ;" then the atmosphere of our earthly homes will settle upon and

over the vales of Paradise. And when the summons of death comes to us, it may be permitted us to tremble, but to dread its invitation, as to something altogether unknown and unfamiliar, will not be possible to the devout imagination.

Finally, men dread death because there is a sting connected with it. “The sting of death is sin,” and sin, we know, “is the transgression of the law” of God, and the blessed dead, whose condition we are considering, are not without experience of its hateful poison. Even to the best of Christian men and women comes the thought—it comes, indeed, in proportion to their moral sensitiveness—that they are unworthy of the infinite purity of Christ ; they feel that the joy of Paradise is so great that they are without title to its bliss, and the punishment of transgression so sure and certain that they are within the purview of its penalty, and hence they look forward to the future, not with the torture of a guilty soul apprehensive of its merited condignment, but with the trembling apprehension that they are not, and never can be, worthy of its rewards. Human merit, with all allowance, is so slight ; but divine love, it must be remembered, is like the sun—never a statistical sun, counting up the merits of the objects on which it shines, but pouring forth its honeyed sunbeams simply because it is the sun, and must shine. It may give one ray of comfort to the dying hour of the faithful Christian to re-

3. The
Sting of
death.

member that Christ says, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments," and the word "keep" (τῆρῃν) means not perfect success in keeping, but a *sincere and earnest desire* to keep, to be on the look-out or watch-tower, to be on the post of observation, like a sentinel, to watch for the commands of God, that we may both observe and seek to do them. *The important thing* is to desire to do as God wills, to love His will and seek to make it ours, ever to be assured and know that what God orders in every event of life is the best for us. The success in keeping His commandments is not so much the cause that determines the destiny of the soul, as the desire and the consecration of our lives to that desire, to do what God commands. Therefore the true Christian need not dread death, because in his veins has flowed the poison of many a sin. Stung he has been, many a time, by the sting of sin; he will feel it at his death-hour, and dread what it has stored up for him; his conscience, educated by Christ, will look, perhaps morbidly, on the evil thoughts and deeds and words which he has uttered, and rightly too, for against infinite purity little deeds of sin look large and black, as motes are seen so numerous and so large in the path of a sunbeam. But our comfort in such remorse is that Christ looks at the desires of the heart, and if He sees these turned towards God and holiness, though often interrupted and frustrate and imperfect, yet will He, who is the interpreter of a boundless love, with His own pierced

hand, pull out the sting and cicatrice the wound with His healing forgiveness.

Apart from these three there are no other shadows which should linger about a Christian's death-bed. These are sufficient to send a beam of darkness athwart the brightest sunlight, but that cloud, as we shall now see, is inspanned with the silver lining of Christian hope.

II.

DEATH THE GOLDEN GATE OF PARADISE.

Phil.1:21. "To die is gain."

καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος

WHAT is the interpretation of death in the sunlight in which Christ has placed it? There is immense significance in the words of the creed, which we say so frequently, and yet which no iteration of custom can ever stale: "I believe in Jesus Christ—dead and buried." That He, in whom was life eternal, should yield His spirit to the darkness, and His body to the experience of death and burial, is of itself a profound fact. Yet, paradox as it seems, it is one we can easily read. The ideal of our race in the life He lived, it was necessary that He should complete that ideal to the utmost limits, by submitting—as He did to baptism "to fulfil all righteousness"—so to death to fulfil all the experiences of humanity. So the evangelists wrote out in full the details of His death-bed—where the bed of the ebbing life was the hard wood of the cross—that the creed of Christendom

The significance of Christ's death.

might forever read, *not* "He was crucified, and passed to Paradise," but "He was crucified, *dead and buried.*" And the thought in Christian minds ever since has been: "*He* passed through the common doom of death, and His sacred body was sealed up in the mysterious tomb," and, in some way, it has softened, to the Christian, the idea of dying, and shed a benign and holy light upon the graves of the dead. It cannot be so fearful for the disciple to do what the Master did, nor for his frail body to rest in a place consecrated by His.

Death, then, begins to emerge from the gloom into the light. St. Paul declares that the perfection of our Lord's humanity necessitated the endurance of death: "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and

St. Paul's
conception
of it.

blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death He might bring to naught him that had the power of death." And inasmuch as life to the Apostle was always real and earnest, he clothed his thoughts with martial language; constructs a battle-field where he sees the two great foes of human life retreating, cries after them, with no little scorn, as they hasted away baffled, "O, death! where is thy sting? O, grave! where is thy victory?" As we share the apostolic thought it becomes impossible for us henceforth to regard death as the bludgeon (τὸ κράτος) of him that hath the power of death. We must shift our point of view. We must realize that,

in some way, death has been greatly changed. We must learn to look upon it, in spite of all natural and distressing environment, as better than we think. What unutterable things are we permitted to think about this solemn ending of human life which men of other and darker days were unable to devise? Certainly we cannot meditate upon it apart from Christ; but we are at liberty to feel, and to feel truly and earnestly, all that lies within the Christ-given horoscope.

There is so much to be said in reply to the broad, general question, "What is the Christian interpretation of death?" that we must separate the subject and look at it in some kind of classified order. Death, as life leads up to it; Death, as life merges into it; Death, as life passes through it to other worlds; let these be our three radiant points.

Life—as it goes sweeping on to death—what is the significance of it? We know that the life-quality of the soul is stronger than the death, that the *vital* transcends the *moribund*, and so the life-hours may of themselves lay aside time to prepare for the death-hour. Death should therefore be regarded in the first place as an event for which Christ tells us, though ignorant of the hour of its advent, to prepare by a life, by a character and conduct, of preceding holiness. Hence, think a moment of this: *Death is an event*

Division
of the sub-
ject.

1. Death, as
an event
prepared for
by life.

prepared for by life. “Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is ; let me know how frail I am,”—this was the wish of David. “So teach us to number our days that we may get us an heart of wisdom”—this was the prayer of Moses. Both were ante-Christian, but they embody the thought of Christ. We must consider our end, the days measured off in imagination, and the days numbered on the scale of a fading mortality, for the purpose of getting a heart of wisdom and knowing how frail we are ; a very consumptive, as it were, in face of eternity ; the frail pappus of a dandelion, blown away by every wind. In view of this necessary frailty, our Lord teaches that, as the dandelion must make its seed while the sun is shining, so the Christian must prepare for death while he is living the throbbing hours of life. His own life was the prelude to death. Everything He did was so full of life, the rich and bounding life of goodness and of truth, that death, and the thought of death, could not disturb its even movement. “He carried the atmosphere of eternity into the work and trials of time. We, on the other hand, either forget the claims of eternity, or neglect the duties of time. Christ did neither.” Death as the gate of eternity was ever before Him ; even in the hour when most transfigured, His “decease” was not absent from His thoughts ; He ever listened for “the hour” that should strike for Him on the dial-plate of eternity. Not that He spoke so much of eternity, for

His life was permitted by necessity only to be practical. "He worked," says another, "while it was called to-day. He taught the ignorant, rebuked the sinful, comforted the sorrow-laden, lived the role of a son, of a friend, of a teacher, of a citizen, of a prophet, of a priest all in one, and did each perfectly. That was the wonder. He neglected nothing, was never swayed by ephemeral circumstance, or failed to maintain between conflicting duties a due proportion." It was a life lived in the midst of the world, going about "doing good" and finding the "common round" of daily duty ample employment for its powers, but enclosed and permeated at every moment by an atmosphere above the world. And so it is that we can best prepare for death. We can make life so full by noble purposes, by high ambitions, by strong affections, and by generous deeds, that death will fall upon it only like a transient shadow upon a full and bounding stream. We can make life so rich with permanent qualities that the mind unconsciously grows to think of death only as an arch through which the river of life passes on to new and fuller scope.

Death but an incident or temporary interruption to life. "He that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live." Our Lord here crowds death into a subordinate part of the sentence, as if it were, as it really is in fact, and as it ought always to be regarded—only a slight thing, an incident in the

2. As an incident or interruption to life.

even flow of life. Practically He bids us regard it as we regard the night and the storm different from the day and the sunlight, but destined soon to pass by and end. Death is sunk in so many terrible associations; many that have come down from heathen times; many that are created by ignorant or by false interpretations of scripture; many that arise from failure to grasp the heavenly promises; many that spring from morbid human feelings, that it becomes necessary to do as Christ did—assign to it its true place. It is subordinate to life. Death is the destruction of our material frame, but that has, according to science, been destroyed many times in the course of our earthly pilgrimage, every seven years every atom of our bodies being renewed. It does in a moment and all together, that which has frequently been done during life. But the matter destroyed was, after all, only the instrument of the spiritual life—the hands, the feet, the brain, with its thousands of cells, were only puppets, connected by strings, and moved according to the dictates of the imperial soul, so that when the body dies, the heart ceases to beat, the blood to flow, and the muscles to move, the soul lives on, can think, will, love, hope, aspire, as much as ever, probably with new organs of expression. Viewed in this way, life is stronger than death. Every nerve may be as dead as when cut by a knife, but this is only to say that the soul has lost its ordinary method of expression; it is as ready as ever to give expres-

sion ; clothe it with a spiritual body, and doubtless it will revel in expression as much as before. The whole line of thought seems to say to us—looking at the meaning of our text : “Align yourself with Christ. He holds the keys of death and the grave. Come close to Him by love so that you also can put your hands upon the keys, and you will find that, in proportion as you ally yourself with Him, the close of life which you now so much dread will sink down into an episode. Or—to keep the same images, an arch through which your life flows ; a drawbridge which rises and falls across your path ; an incident which will happen or fall upon you some day ; an interruption that comes to your thinking, willing, loving, but only transitory. Let us speak truly : *life* is not transitory, but *death* is. That is the transition through which we pass from things below and painful to things above and beatific.

This leads us to think of death, next, *as a conquered thing*. “Death hath no more dominion over Him.”

“O, grave ! where is thy victory ?”

3. As a con-
quered
thing. “Christ hath abolished death.” All this is very strong language, especially so to those “who, through the fear of death, are subject unto bondage.” It says to the Christian : “Death had once in men’s fears a dominion—it has it no more ; it had in early days a victory over men’s minds ; it has been wrenched from the grasp of the grave ; it has, in fact, been altogether abolished.” It

is not necessary to go back to other times to prove the tyranny of death over the human imagination ; it was intensely terrible then ; it is somewhat terrible now, but as a gloomy and unaccountable event the Christian does not accept it. For Christ passed through this crowning experience of humanity that "through death He might destroy him that had the power of death," *i.e.* the devil, "and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." To conquer an enemy it is only necessary to strip him of the armor wherein he trusted, and to take away his power of doing harm. This our Lord has done with regard to death. He has descended to its nethermost darkness, undergone its final pang, and returning thence has told us that there is nothing there which a Christian need dread.

So far, then, as our first point is concerned, the attitude of the Christian mind towards death in the hours and years preceding its advent, we shall find it a great comfort habitually to regard life as always superior to death, reaching it finally to find death a conquered foe ; and only an accident in immortality, an experience for which every year of faithful service has prepared us.

In consequence of these facts there began to appear what might be called a *Christian tone* in regard to the great close of human life. *Death is declared to be a "gain," an advantage, a something better.* "To die is gain," exclaimed St. Paul ; and, in another place,

“having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for it is very far better.” This is clearly to be distinguished from the similar wish of Job: “O, that I might have my request! and that God would grant me the thing I long for!” or, from the bitter exclamation: “I loathe my life; I would not live alway.” The one is the writhing of an embittered spirit, speaking from the emptiness of life, with no clear prospect of another world; the other is the exclamation of a thoroughly healthy man, speaking out of the fullness of life, and clearly discerning his eternal hope. The former is common enough with distempered spirits, but the latter is assuredly the true Christian attitude. It is the attitude of perfect trust, willing to abide here in the world as long as duty incomplete seems to demand its stay, but feeling sure that the great act of transition is a distinct gain and betterment. How greatly have mortal hopes moved on and up since the days when men faced eternity with an “awful perhaps” or a “possible if” upon their lips! It never occurred to the ancients, it rarely occurs to us, that a strong, healthy nature, in full employment of its faculties, and in the midst of great and active duties, out of no morbid sentiment, from no exhaustion at the discouragements of duty, might yet distinctly long for the close of life as a positive betterment and gain. It shows us how Christ has transfigured the whole conception of death. It tells us in the midst of the

4. As “a gain,” a something better.

common fears of mortality that so hopeful an attitude is possible to us. It seems to shame any sense of dread and of uncertainty that may haunt us who all our life-time are subject to bondage through such fears for ourselves or for our loved ones. Their present condition is distinctly a "gain;" they have an "advantage" over us who remain. No matter how many ties of pure and refined attachment have bound us together in a home; no matter how great the affection that has subsisted between us nor how deep that

"Love, the dear delight, of hearts that know no guile,
Who all around see all things bright with their own magic smile,"

yet their life now is "far better," for they are with Christ. What "to be with Christ" means we shall see later; but meanwhile it is like a flood of light upon a very dark place, to think of the great, solemn article of death as a gain. If it be a *gain* it cannot be so dreadful to pass into its experience, however greatly our mortal nature may shrink from it; if it be a *gain* it cannot be a loss, as we so often speak of it, and we should prepare for it as men who are about to gain, not to lose, a splendid heritage.

The article of death is accompanied by a sense of peace and of the divine presence. "Thou

5. Accompanied by peace and God's presence.

art with me; Thy Rod and Thy Staff support me." "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace." It was an old man's prayer, but an old man whose life had been passed in the best conditions for

earthly peace. In his life righteous, and in the service of God devout, his heart ever looking for the consolation of Israel ; among his race retaining the pure spirit of trust in God and in His promises ; living in the holy atmosphere of the temple, doubtless this aged patriarch had lived more than most men a life devoid of worldly strife, and had found such peace as this world could give, but it did not compare with “the peace which is from above.” And so, the great wish of his heart gratified, with the consolation of Israel held at last in his trembling arms, he breathed out the simple request that the peace and presence of God might wait upon his death-bed. Doubtless his prayer was granted, and “the latter end of that man was peace.” Apart from the promises of scripture it is often seen in fulfillment that God waits upon the dying hour of his saints with a special benediction. The long-dreaded event has come within the door and to the bedside ; the feeble hand reaches to the brow and finds the death-dew settled there, and the sufferer knows the hour appointed for him on the dial-plate of time is ringing in his ears,—but where are the gloom and darkness which he anticipated ? Can this be death, the king of terrors, who so gently is soothing the weary brain to sleep ? Slowly the clock ticks upon the mantle-piece, slowly the heart grows weak, but where are the fear and the dread ? A Hand seems to take the attenuated hand within a loving grasp, a Voice to whisper : “Be not afraid ;”

and quietly as a child might be bosomed on its mother's breast, the weary soul is soothed into the restful sleep of death. Nor is the nursing complete even when the angel of death has done its work and retired; for invisible hands seem to rub out each wrinkle of care, and throw a smile so peaceful upon the worn and pallid features, as a parting sunbeam lingers on a dreary landscape. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his Saints."

Look now at the issues of death. These will reveal to us more than the preceding thoughts the

Christian interpretation of death and why
 6. As the transition from the evils of the world. it is a gain. *Death is the transition from the evils of the world.* "Remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things,

but now he is comforted and thou art tormented." There is a very necessary postulate to be supplied in this sentence. Of course it does not, and cannot mean: "now he is comforted and receives good things, because in life he received evil things;" but—supply the elision and omission—"he received evil things *and bore them well*, now, *therefore*, he is comforted." Death is not a simple transition from evil to good; it is not going to end all evil and make us superlatively happy, without any moral title on our part. We are not simply to slip into this because we have been sufferers in the world; ah, no! Paradise is not so easily gained. But to have had an evil lot

in the world, and to have borne it well, it is to such an one that death comes as a joyful transition from evil. To the noble sufferers in any one of the vast catalogues of human ill, it comes as the escape, the relief, the cessation from all evil, provided the one condition be fulfilled, that we have tried to bear our lot well. To have toiled and labored through the whole of life, fulfilling the great law of humanity, with many an inward weariness, but never an outward taking our hand from off the plow, longing for, and hastening forward to a rest that never came—at last to have the burden drop from the shoulder, the strained nerves give way to rest, the anxious give over the struggle for subsistence, ah ! what bliss: Death is *the cessation from labor*. To have been the victim for many a day and, it may be, years, of physical pain, disease, and deformity ; to have been scarcely ever free from pain, our nerves the heated pathways of quick-footed messengers of disorder, the body worn and weary with the sharp maladies of disease, yet cheerfully to have lived among the well and strong, our presence a source of sunshine to others—and then to have all pain cease—all disease gone—all deformity forever removed—ah ! death is *the cessation of pain and disease*. To have other struggles in life,—struggles not now of the body but of the soul,—to have strong yearnings for knowledge, but baffled on every side by the limitations of this existence, an existence which can only know in part, and must see through a glass

darkly ; to have the deeps of mighty affection stirred within us, but their objects swept away by the relentless tides of a brief mortality ; to have cherished a great expectation of justice, but never seen its fair equities done between man and man ; to have struggled, as we went through life, in all the ungenial ways of a wrong environment, yet to have kept our honor, courage, and perseverance intact and undismayed—then to pass from partial knowledge to full, from broken affections to renewed, from defeated justice to supreme, from ungenial circumstances to favorable, ah ! this is part of the blessed transition ; death is *the cessation of all ignorance, all injustice, and even of death itself*. And then there are the noblest struggles of all—struggles now of the immortal spirit. To have the high standard of Christian purity and holiness, and the internecine strife with all the band of turbid passions ; to have the highest and holiest aspirations, rising ever toward God and heaven—and then aspiration with its wing cut by some grovelling sin, wounded on the earth ; to long for light and truth, to pierce “the sad and solemn mysteries of human life,” and then to fall back baffled and discouraged by some earth-born doubt, but ever to have preserved fidelity and love ; to these, the choice spirits of humanity, death will come as *the cessation of all sin, all doubt, all infirmity*. In one brief sentence, whatever of evil has fallen, falls to-day, or shall fall, upon any child of man, whether to his body, bringing any pain or

misery, or to his soul, causing any darkness or distress, or to his immortal spirit, bringing any agony or rebellion, death shall take away that evil from body, soul, or spirit, in the transition to the other world, if he has borne that evil with a Christian's trust and perseverance.

In a word, *Death is the transition to blessedness.*
“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.” Not
the full and perfect blessedness of heaven,
7. As the transition to blessedness. for those who are in Paradise “without us shall not be made perfect;” but blessedness there is to every one who dies in Christ :
blessedness, on the one side, in the evils of the world he has gone from ; blessedness, on the other, in the joys of the world he has gone to. What those joys are we shall soon consider.

But in closing our meditation upon death, let us be true to both sides of the great event. That the human heart should weep at death—that
Conclusion. to “leave all that has gladdened the eye, enchanted the ear, stirred the intellect, soothed and satisfied the heart, should always be a great pang”—that the pain of death, the mystery of death, and the sting of death, should fill the soul with trembling—is both natural and permitted by Him Who wept at the grave of Lazarus. But these fears are mostly in anticipation, and disappear as we draw near to the great reality. And whatever of darkness remains is more than illuminated by the sunlight of

Christian hope. In union with the Lord of life, life comes crowding in upon the soul, and death dwindles down to an episode. The Christian at least

“—— can moralize
And say that Death is but a mediator
Between the lower and the loftier life.”

With hands confident, though trembling, he can open the portals of death “as but the little golden gate that opens into Paradise.”

III.

IN PARADISE.

Luke 23:43. "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

μετ' ἐμοῦ ἔσῃ ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ

THE solemn close of life has come at last. Death has come on "so gentle a wing, the feeble pulse fluttering into stillness, the light of the eye retiring within, the fleeting breath ceasing to breathe," that the spirit has departed in reverent silence. In that moment, ever solemn and mysterious in human lives, the minds of men make a true and important distinction ; they separate the fate of the spirit from that of the body. They estimate correctly, for a moment at least, their true relation. They realize then that the body has been only the instrument of the mind ; it has received its nobility from being associated with the immortal spirit. Parted from its lordly tenant, there is no longer consciousness or personality connected with that lifeless form. Precious as it has been from a thousand sacred associations, the body can no

longer be honored with the personal pronoun "he" or "she;" the body now is *It*,—a precious thing, yet devoid of personality. Its future is clearly known,—the reverent burial, the sacred entombment in the grave, *but where is the immortal spirit?*

But before we answer this question, let us insist for the sake of Christian truth, on the importance of preserving the distinction between the body and the soul, in our thoughts and language. Let us not speak,—and if not speak, certainly not think,—of burying our loved ones; that were impossible. Even Socrates, a heathen, could say: "You can bury me, Critias, if you can catch my spirit; you can bury my body, but that is not to bury *me*." Much more should a Christian feel that all the legions of the prince of darkness could not place an immortal spirit in the grave. Wherever it is, certainly it is not there. The reverent burial, the flowers which love puts above the tomb, the careful watch which bereaved affection keeps over the graves of its loved ones, is both true and tender and is permitted to us. Says one: "There is a comfort in kneeling on some fair spring morning by the freshly-sodded grave, where the body rests which we have loved. The sun is up, the flowers are waking, the trailing ivy leaves are brushing the grasses of the grave. Sweet light is round you, soft sounds are in your ears, the light of morning changing the dancing waves into a confusion of sparkling gold, making the

Importance
of preserv-
ing this
distinction.

unbending yew tree glad ; the sound of joyous birds, of busy breezes, of lapping waves—waves whose soft strong cadence speaks the murmurous music of the sea.” But while thus engaged, fail not to hear the angel of the loved one’s life : “ Not here, but risen.” Let no false epitaph carved on the cold marble which marks the spot lead your imagination to fancy them beneath the sod. We do not have to travel to the city of the dead to find them. They never have been there !

Compared with many of our modern inscriptions, there is so much truthfulness, as well as a calm and serene pathos, in the inscriptions of the
Inscriptions in the catacombs. Of the forty thousand which have been collected there is not one that confuses body with spirit and makes the resting-place of one the habitat of the other. Generally they contain a prayer for the departed, and read like these : “ Hilaris, may you live happily with your friends ; may you be refreshed in the peace of God ; ” “ Kalemos, may God refresh thy spirit together with that of thy sister, Hilara.” Sometimes the prayer is for refreshment, sometimes for light ; “ Timothea, mayest thou have eternal light in Christ.” In all, the body is in the grave, the spirit is with Christ ; all speak of the continued and unceasing life of the spirit.

If the spirit of man be not confined in the grave, where then is it ? Upon a question so vital and important as the condition of those who have gone before

us, and of the future that awaits us beyond the gate of death, there are two authorities only ;

1. The Spirit is in Paradise. the Word of God and the witness of the Church. The voice of revelation is clear and distinct. At death the spirit passes to Paradise. We are shown this first in the case of our Lord. The passage in St. Peter's epistle so often quoted as to have become a *locus classicus*: Christ "being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit ; by which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison." We gather from this that Christ, after His death on Calvary, went in His spirit to the intermediate place where were the spirits of men who had never heard the gospel, and there proclaimed the good news of salvation. The attempt has often been made to break the force of this passage, but the construction of the original Greek, and the almost contemporaneous agreement of the early fathers, constrain us to this interpretation. To the same intermediate state points our Lord's reply on the cross to the penitent thief: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Stirred by the unearthly grandeur of the Sufferer by his side, the better nature of the dying malefactor asserts itself, and in his newly-found penitence craves for some future blessing—to be remembered when He comes into His kingdom ; but an immediate blessing is promised—that of being with Christ in Paradise before the sun should sink that day over Moriah's hill. Years roll by, and a later apostle,

one born out of due time, tells us of a transcendent experience vouchsafed to himself: "I knew such a man (whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell: God knoweth) how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter." Still again the years roll by over the infant church, until the last of the apostles is "in the spirit" on the Isle of Patmos, and is given a vision of the souls in the intermediate state: "I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a great voice, saying, 'How long, O Master, the Holy and True, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?'" Their impatience was appeased by the gift of "a white robe," and "it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little while, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren which should be killed, even as they were, should be fulfilled." From such concurrent testimony, justified as it was by the similar belief of the Jewish Church, the truth at once sunk into the hearts of the early Christians that the soul at death passes into Paradise, an intermediate and not yet completed state of blessedness.

In course of time, arose that article of the creed: "He descended into hell," an article which confesses upon every repetition of the creed our belief in Paradise, yet an article frequently misunderstood and often

misleading, unless the reciter reads the prefatory note ; the words, He descended into hell, may be exchanged for the words, He went into the place of departed spirits, " which are considered as words of the same meaning in the creed." Thus truly and carefully, in accordance with Holy Writ and the testimony of early authors, does the Church teach that the spirit of man, at the moment of death, passes into Paradise, the place of departed spirits.

It is erroneous to think and teach otherwise. It is erroneous to teach and think that the soul of the righteous dead passes at death into heaven.

2. It is not in heaven. Yet how common is this error, to suppose that the full fruition of a faithful life—man's final and complete state of bliss,—is given at the moment of departure, is man's at once, as soon as he passes the trembling curtain that divides the unseen from the seen. Popular language, of course, is not the justification of theology, nor the expression of truth ; but popular language may oftentimes reveal ignorance of fundamental Christian truth. And there can be from the Word of God nothing more sure and fundamental than that heaven is *not* the immediate gift of the faithful man when he dies. There is a way of speech about our friends : " He is in heaven— if ever man were in heaven, he is," and then, by placing heaven millions and millions of Jupiter-orbits away, we manage to remove our loved ones at that distance from us, and in conditions where our hearts

cannot reach them, and the nearer comforts of Paradise are lost! "But why," some one may ask, "are we not at liberty to say that heaven is the immediate reward of the blessed dead?"—scripture, of necessity, being the only source of information. In the first place because heaven is always represented as being the award of the day when Christ shall come to judgment. Taking the abbreviated passage of St. Matthew as an example: "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory . . . and before Him shall be gathered all nations, . . . *then* shall the King say unto them on His right hand, 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the earth.'"

The great last things which we must traverse in their proper order are given in scripture: we are to die; then to be with Christ in Paradise; then both the living and the dead—"those who are asleep and those who remain" are to be judged; and then finally, *after all these experiences*, the blessed dead pass into heaven. Heaven, therefore, will be the reward of the faithful, not after death, but after judgment. There are many lines of thought that prove the same thing. For example, we know that not "anything that defileth" nor that is evil or maketh evil shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Take the case of a man whose life has been merged in sensuality, but who in the supreme hour of death undergoes remorse and receives pardon—have not the habits of his life crystallized into an essentially

evil character, and the climate of his soul become impure? Shall he not need time to build up a new character on his penitence, to form new habits in the place of the old, to attune his spirit so as to be prepared for the harmonies of heaven? Assuredly his penitence and pardon have disqualified him for hell, but have not yet qualified him for heaven! We might make a broader generalization and say, few are the souls who have died in perfect holiness; some evil stain flecks the purity of almost every life; many capacities are not yet large enough for the dimensions of the heavenly life. Yet heaven, we know, is the condition of perfect holiness where nothing evil can enter; it follows, therefore, that the souls of men must tarry yet a little while in Paradise for higher lessons and education before they are fitted for supreme bliss. We can think of a soul in Paradise as slowly developed from "whatever evil it may have contracted in the midst of this sinful world," but in heaven we cannot think of evil at all.

In accordance with this view heaven is always represented as being, not only the condition of perfect holiness, without a shadow of evil, but

3. Heaven
the condi-
tion of
perfect
blessedness.

also as the state of perfect bliss, without a strain of imperfection. But how is Paradise represented? A place of happiness undoubtedly; of blessedness most assuredly; but not perfected and complete. "The souls under the altar" are crying "How long, O Master,

the Holy and True," and are given "white robes" in alleviation, and told that the cycle of their waiting will not be complete until the faithful ones of earth shall have joined them. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, after the long calendar of the saints is concluded, this derogation from their perfect bliss is mentioned: "These all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better things concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect." These passages assure us that the living and the dead one communion make, and that the faithful dead without us shall not reach their final and perfect condition; that heaven still lies before them on the horizon of the future; in a word, that the Church in Paradise is *Expectant*—not yet *Triumphant*. Here as usual we confirm our faith by the words of the creed, by the example of our Great Leader: "He descended into hell" (the place of departed spirits)—this indicates the first step of the celestial journey; "He ascended into heaven"—this indicates the final stage of full fruition.

Men, recognizing the force of these objections that heaven cannot be the immediate state of the soul after death, go sometimes to the other extreme

4. The spirit and assert that the soul sleeps or is unconscious between death and the judgment.
 not asleep
 nor uncon-
 scious.

An old article of the Church declares:
 "The souls of them that depart this life do neither die with the bodies nor sleep idly. They

which say that the souls of such as depart hence do sleep, being without all sense, feeling, or perceiving until the day of judgment . . . do utterly dissent from the right belief declared to us in Holy Scripture." It has been the profound and tender thought of many nations to rob death of some of its terrors by speaking of it as sleep. The Hindoo worships Brahma "sleeping on the stars in immovable calm." It was a favorite image with the Hebrew :

"Of all the thoughts of God that are
Borne inward unto souls afar,
Along the Psalmist's music deep,
Now tell me if that any is,
For gift or grace surpassing this :—
'He giveth His Beloved sleep.'"

Christ and His apostles caught up this use of the word and continued it. He says, "Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep;" "The little maid is not dead but sleepeth." St. Luke writes of Stephen that "he fell asleep." St. Paul speaks often of those who "are asleep in Christ." St. Peter writes of "the fathers who have fallen asleep." It is a great thing that we are permitted to take one of the dearest words in our language, associated as it is in every mind with rest, refreshment, and "tired nature's sweet restorer," and under its soothing imagery to think of death; but there should be no mistake in our apprehension of the image;—*it does not imply that there is any suspension of consciousness in the soul.* Other scriptures

assure us that the spirit in Paradise is possessed of all the elements of consciousness—memory, sensibility to pain and pleasure; that the life of men continues without interruption during the intermediate state. We have not many scenes photographed upon our hearts from behind the curtain of death, but such as we have point to the continued conscious life of the soul. In the mysterious scene of the Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appear upon the mount talking with the Lord—certainly they were not asleep and unconscious. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, a dramatic scene is drawn of the conversation between the rich man and Abraham—certainly neither the sinner nor the saint was asleep and unconscious. In the visit made by our Lord to the spirits in prison when He brought to them the glad tidings of salvation,—assuredly it was not an unconscious audience to which He preached. In the cry of the wailing souls beneath the altar, the very intensity of their supplication to the Master witnesses that those expectant spirits were neither unconscious nor asleep. In the promise made to the penitent thief upon the cross that he should join Christ that day in Paradise is a guarantee that it was to no land of forgetfulness or unconscious sleep to which he was invited. In the longing of St. Paul to depart and be with Christ we may be sure that it was to no state of unconsciousness or inactivity that the eager heart of the apostle expected to go. But enough; memory, regret, love,

fear, hope, all natural feelings remain to the spirits of the dead: they are fully conscious of themselves, of their Redeemer, and of all around them. It is into no cave, like that which held the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus where they were quietly sleeping through the centuries, we enter when death throws open for us the golden gate of Paradise.

We have now seen that the soul does not pass into a state of unconsciousness; we have previously proved that it does not enter into heaven at death.

5. Witness of the fathers to the intermediate state.

We return to our original statement that its first stage after separation from the natural body will be Paradise or the intermediate state of spiritual activity. Such has always been the belief of the church from the earliest times. Tertullian asks, "How shall the soul mount up to heaven where Christ is already sitting at the right hand of the Father, when as yet the archangel's trumpet has not been heard by the command of God? To no one is heaven opened; when the world shall pass away, then the kingdom of heaven shall be opened." Origen writes, "Not even the apostles have yet received their joy, but even they are waiting in order that I too may become a partaker of their joy. For the saints departing hence do not immediately receive all the rewards of their deserts; but they wait even for us, though we be loitering and dilatory,"—and then he quotes that passage from the Hebrews, "they without us shall not be made perfect." Justyn

Martyr goes very far in condemning the view that men go to heaven at death : “ If you have fallen in with any persons called Christians who say that the souls of the dead at the time of their death are taken up to heaven, do not regard them as Christians.” An almost unbroken line of testimony embracing writers of such different schools as Justyn and Ireneus, Clement and Origen on the one side, Tertullian and Cyril of Jerusalem on the other, describes the Lord’s descent to Hades as a visit to spirits in the intermediate state ; there was also the universal custom of prayers for the progress in purity of the souls of the departed ; all of this testimony conclusively proving that the early Christians believed that at death the spirits of men went to Paradise, and not to heaven. Not even the heathen, so far as the current mythology gained hold of the popular imagination, were without a similar belief. In the 6th book Virgil writes :

“ When life is o’er, and man’s last hour has come,
Not even then does evil cease to harm,
Nor are the taints of death cleansed all at once ;
It needs must be that much will linger still,
Through o’erlong use, in fashion wonderful.
Some few to the Elysian plains pass on,
And dwell in fields of blessing, till at last
When the full time is come, the long, long day
Has cleansed each deep-dyed stain, and leaves the soul
Ethereal, pure, the immaterial fire.”

We rest upon solid foundation when we think of

those "we have loved and lost awhile" as denizens of the world of Paradise. It is needless Conclusion. now to calculate how much reality and consolation has been lost to the Christian heart, by losing from its faith the belief of the Saints in Paradise, where not yet perfected they are waiting for us who remain on earth that together we may be prepared for the final beatific vision of God. Paradise seems, by comparison with heaven, near at hand, separated from us by only a trembling curtain ; and for them, as for ourselves, it is both our duty and our privilege to pray that "together with them we may finally be partakers of the Heavenly Kingdom."

IV.

THE ACTIVITIES OF PARADISE.

1 John 3:2. "We know that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him even as He is."

ὅμοιοι αὐτῷ ἐσόμεθα

WE have seen from scripture that the conscious life of the soul continues after death, that man does not enter upon a sleep through the centuries to be awakened at last by the trumpet of judgment.

Man has merely laid aside his earthly
What are the activities of the intermediate state. tabernacle, the residence of his soul during his earthly pilgrimage, and continues *man*, with all the faculties that belong to conscious life. All the scenes presented to

us show us man in the possession and employment of these powers of the soul. The souls beneath the altar with the cry of human impatience upon their lips; Dives and Lazarus with the memory of other days and occupations the subject of their interview; the penitent thief with the fulfilled promise of Christ's presence as the reward of his penitence and the pledge of his forgiveness; the apostle Paul caught up to hear the unutterable words of Paradise so that he longs to depart and be with Christ; the spirits in prison with

the expectation of a better hope as the result of Christ's preaching to the dead; Moses and Elijah, men of older days, with their interest and their prophecy of the demise of the Lord upon the cross; all are so many exhibitions of the conscious life which is running on behind the veil. Souls, then, are conscious: it follows next to ask, What are the activities of men in the intermediate state?

There is nothing in death to break the law of continuity and to involve the cessation by the soul of all active and energetic life. It is the separation from the man of his outer equipment: the taking away "the garments by the soul laid by," and folding them for interment on the shelves of the tomb; but it is nothing more. Up to the moment of separation the man has been a willing, thinking, loving being; after that moment, with more perfect equipment, he continues the same active and energetic play of human faculties. We can love and think and will, undergo hope, expectation and joy, as easily for an eternity as for a brief three score years and ten. New organs might be required, but no new faculties for the execution of the design. Man then by the act of death stands stripped of his bodily nature, but conscious, with his spiritual powers intact and unimpaired. But all conscious life involves progress or—it may be—retrogression. Man has not been made perfect in this world; perfection and holiness are almost impossible

Conscious
life involves
progress.

attainments for him in this life. "On the supposition that there is no change nor progress in the intermediate state, then it follows that there is a long period in which the operations of God's spirit are suspended, and an imperfect soul is left to stagnate in its imperfection," and so not fitted at last to enter heaven unless made perfect by a fiat of omnipotent will, wiping away all remaining evil. But this is unworthy to be believed in comparison with the truth that the soul of man progresses to purity through the activities of Paradise. Progress is the law of life written everywhere by the hand of God. We can think of no object, unless dead, inanimate matter, which is not passing through its cycles of progress; and even the dead, inanimate creation of rock and stone, hillside and valley, through the centuries of evolution have progressed from the poison-breeding climate of the carboniferous age down to the pleasant landscapes that are fitted for man's abode. And of history, and ethics, and men's moral movements, the trend has ever been from the lower to the higher, as if all nature was imbosomed by "a power that makes for righteousness." Given conscious life, the result must ever be progress. Therefore the conception of "a state in which the soul being conscious, *must* remain absolutely in the same ethical state as that in which it left the body, contradicts all the analogies of nature, as it does those scripture which are the basis of the belief of Christendom." David, with no

Christian illumination of Paradise, could yet say: "they go from strength to strength until before the God of gods appeareth every one of them in Zion." St. Paul—we must notice this distinction—made the coming of Christ, *not* the advent of death, the limit of the progressive work in the soul. He writes to the Philippians of his confidence that "He which began a good work in you will perfect it *until the day of Jesus Christ.*" He prays on behalf of the Thessalonians that "their whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless *unto the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" He begs the Corinthians to wait "for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ Who shall confirm you unto the end that ye may be unreprouvable *in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ*—their development was to continue uninterruptedly unto the advent of Christ. There is therefore wonderful significance in the fact that from the scriptural point of view, death interrupts nothing of the ethical development of the soul, but that it progresses unto "the day of Christ."

Practically considered, this continued progress is what we would wish for and expect. Take the aver-

The average condition of Christians at death.

age condition of Christian men and women at the hour of their translation. While their capacities differ as "one star differeth from another star in glory" and their degrees of merit vary from those "who have borne the heat and burden of the day" to those "who

have worked but one hour," still it is no insult to the best and noblest of humanity to say that stains cling to the very best of God's saints—stains of evil even when the sin has been forgiven. With these marks of human weakness upon them they enter Paradise. It will not be God's way in Paradise, as it is not His way on earth, to force men into goodness by an act of omnipotent will. Moral laws work on with terrible exactness. Into the new conditions we carry ourselves—"selves which must be affected most importantly by the transition, but which cannot in the nature of things, lose their individuality, or change instantly their ethical status." There remains, therefore, the necessity for that progressive sanctification, of which scripture speaks.

Convinced by all these considerations that we enter at death upon a course of new and greater development, we ask again, What are these activities and energies of the soul in the intermediate state?

Details are not given to us ; but just in proportion as it is wrong and irreverent to seek for details which have not been revealed, in that proportion is it wise for us to seek to know most clearly what Christ has seen fit to reveal. Many have been the irreverent fancies of men "rushing in where angels fear to tread," but these extravagances and misstatements on so sweet and solemn a subject should not prevent us from meditating upon the great and comforting truths

General
outlines,
not details,
of Paradise
revealed.

which are clearly declared. "Let us," says another, "guard against what is not true ; but no mistakes, no misconceptions, need force us to maintain this heartless, this almost Pagan silence." The whole *outer* environment of the future life is unknown to us, as the stars and flowers which soon shall meet its gaze are to the unborn babe ; but the secrets of its *inner* life are not so hidden from our hearts :

"Far out of sight while sorrows still enfold us,
Lies the fair country where our hearts abide ;
And of its bliss is naught more wondrous told us
Than these few words, 'I shall be satisfied.'"

The first great truth is that the spirits of men in Paradise shall be *with Christ*. From His last prayer on earth, "Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am," and

1. The spirit from His last promise on earth, "To-day
is with
Christ. shalt thou be with Me in Paradise," assuredly we gather the certainty of this

truth. It is almost enough to pause right here and rest in the blessedness of this assurance. But let us go further and see what it implies. Those to whom this promise is given are the same as when summoned by the angel of death ; they have the same human hearts and faculties ; they have the same longings after goodness, the same aspirations after perfection ; the same ideal of perfect truth and duty hangs before their eyes ; the same hatred of evil and impurity ; the same capability of remorse and shame when the ideal

is unattained, and the good that is known is left undone ; in fact, the same individuality with its

“bursts of great heart, and slips in sensual mire ;”

in fact, the same man enmeshed so strangely in many evil things, yet longing so heartily and struggling so earnestly after the model left by his Lord. And Christ is also the same, He has not changed since He walked upon earth in the limited area of Palestine, binding up the wounds of sin and sorrow ; implacable towards nothing save the evil deeds of cruelty and hypocrisy, scathing these with the lightning of His look while He bent a tender glance upon the sin that was frail but penitent ; gathering up the little ones into His arms and blessing ; stopping the procession of human sorrow that He might restore the lost to the embrace of bereaved affection ; bidding human grief to overflow in tears that it might have relief ; discerning the subtlest necessity of every soul to express its love in measure however small ; in every thought and word and deed “doing good” that no reed however bruised should be crushed, and no flickering wick go out in the boisterous wind of human judgment ; the same Christ in Paradise as He was at Jacob’s well, or on the temple’s marble floor where the adulteress sobbed out the story of her shame ; or best of all, as He was upon the cross of Calvary during the three hours of His agony. Whatever those words may mean which speak of a time

when the Son shall give up His kingdom into the hands of His Father that God “may be all in all”—and this is not the place to attempt their explanation—Christ during the intermediate state will be the same human Christ who walked in Jewry. Thus the soul of man and the human Christ will be the same; only the conditions of the paradisaical life will be new and more favorable to progress. “We shall see Him just as He is”—a vision never vouchsafed to His first disciples, because their dreams of an earthly kingdom were forever disturbing their pure enjoyment of His presence and their clear comprehension of His words; and never given to us because every age has had its own ideal of Christ and the true ideal has only been partially revealed to any age. Men at no time during the Christian cycle have seen Him just as He is, but that vision will be the first and primal bliss of the saints in Paradise. At the time of that pure and perfect vision the world will have sunk out of sight; the pressure exerted by its manifold attractions will have ceased; the desires entertained by men for its fugitive pleasures will have cooled; the vail between the soul and the world—obscuring its vanity, and the vail between the soul and Christ—hiding His supernal loveliness as the “one altogether lovely” will have been rent in twain, and there will remain “face to face” but these two, the soul completely revealed, and the Christ, perfectly discerned. The results of this presence of the spirit of man with

Christ must be twofold : a keener hatred and abandonment of evil ; a clearer knowledge and adoption of good. The faithful have this double side of their nature here on earth ; they hate evil but not strongly and persistently enough ; they love good but not earnestly and absolutely enough. But there, the perfect presence of Christ will work a change ; certain results, it would seem, must naturally take place under the new conditions of the intermediate life. Removed from all the warping judgments of the world the soul will, in the presence of Christ, clearly know itself and its Saviour. Evil seen in the clear light of His perfect purity and love will seem more loathsome, and as a result there will be, there must be, as an indispensable condition of the soul's closing with its past and entering upon the new life of holiness and goodness, a genuine and wholesome act of repentance and shame. Forgiven by the same love that bore so gently the infirmities of His chosen apostles, the spirit, with a memory that has lost its bitterness, humbled and strengthened, will start with greater capacity upon its career of increasing purity. We must not shrink from an act of penitence as part of the work of the intermediate state—there is nothing more health-giving to the souls of men than their states of genuine repentance. All new life takes its start in the sense and shame of failure. But if our Lord's presence operates thus with respect to the evil that is left in His saints, how much more does that presence act

upon the germs of goodness which they bring with them to Paradise. Ah, here it is, indeed, Christ's presence develops goodness. "unutterable words," as the apostle declared, that we might speak. As the garment "that whitens in the sun grows pure by being purely shone upon," so the spirit of the saint with Christ Who is the Sun of Righteousness, will doubtless develop all its latent powers of truth and holiness. With larger knowledge of divine truth, will come nobler conceptions of duty; with the benediction of His encouragement and love, will be greater accomplishments of the truth that is known. Capacities for all good will grow "with what they are fed upon." "That earnestness of desire, that strength of pure affection, that nobility of aim, that harmony and sweetness of nature," discerned in their earthly life by the eye of love, passing into Paradise will be developed by the presence of Christ. Thus upon the double side of human nature the communion with Christ will work its healing work—healing and curing the plague-spots of still abiding sin, stimulating and developing the germinal tendencies of good.

As a second truth which is the result of the first, the soul shall be "*like Christ*." "We know that we shall be like Him," says St. John. With wonder and amazement we have often, during the weakness and infirmities of our earthly lives, heard those commands, "to be perfect as He is perfect, holy as He is holy, pure

2. The spirit shall be like Christ.

as He is pure." We have passed them over as the words of an optimist who did not understand the difficulties of human struggle or the obstacles to mortal attainment. But here the statement appears again as the final aim of the intermediate life. A word is needed to explain ; there is a divine order and a human ; to us can never be the perfection of that heavenly order ; but it is possible for us to be like Christ, that is,—as He is perfect in His heavenly kind, so it may be permitted the saints to be perfect in their human kind. In a word humanity may shake off its imperfection and reach the ideal of humanity as it lay in the divine mind ; and Paradise is the scene of the progress which leads up to this result. If ever there has come to us the longing, in the midst of fiery temptations, to stand scathless and untouched, like Christ in the wilderness ; if ever the desire to move undismayed to our chosen purpose of truth, like Christ before Pilate ; if ever the wish to submit wholly and unreservedly to the better will of God, like Christ in Gethsemane ; if ever the prayer for the patience and courage to be undisturbed amid the storms of calumny and injustice, like Christ before the Sanhedrin ; if ever the wish possesses us for the perfect trust that can stand hopefully before death, like Christ upon the cross, if ever the aspiration for that perfect consecration that passes through the scenes of life without evil in thought or deed, like Christ in His entire life on earth ; we are told, we are assuredly promised, that

these longings shall be gratified in Paradise, and we in very truth "shall be like Him."

Scripture speaks of *the method* of obtaining this Christ-likeness under the general image and language of purification. Souls who "die in the

3. The
method is by
purification.

Lord " die in very different stages of likeness to Him ; there is much to be purified

away before they are ready for the beatific

vision. Because others have corrupted the purification of the intermediate state into a doctrine of Purgatory with masses,—that is no reason for us to leave the plain teaching of scripture and the early Church.

The 22d article speaks only of "the Romish doctrine concerning Purgatory as a fond thing, vainly invented and grounded upon no warranty of scripture;" it does not refer to an intermediate state of purification. Fire and flame, which we have filled

with such terrible associations, were the favorite images of purification ;—fire so imaged from its purifying and refining work on metals, purging away the dross and leaving pure the silver and the gold. "Fire," says one of the fathers, "purifies not flesh, but sinful souls." "All must be passed through fire," says another, "as many as desire to return to Paradise"—

"every one shall be salted with fire," said Christ.

"One shall be tried as silver," says a third, "I as lead, I shall burn till the lead melts away." Their language was only the continuation of the imagery of scripture. Christ had been foretold as One Who

should sit as the refiner and purifier of silver ; He was to baptize with the cleansing element of fire ; God Himself was imaged as “a consuming fire ;” the Holy Spirit descended with tongues of fire, as figures of His sanctifying work ; St Paul draws back the curtain and shows us ending fire testing every man’s work of what sort it is, burning up all evil in the foundation of his life, but the man himself “saved so as by fire.” There can be no mistaking the meaning wrapped up in this image. The whole heathen world with their rites in which fire played so important a part could readily understand this figure of speech. Sometimes the image is dropped and its equivalent term “suffering” is employed : He made “the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering ;” St. Peter invokes “the God of all grace, after that ye have suffered awhile, to make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” Says a thoughtful writer, “we may well believe that a deepening and more thorough penitence, arising from a clear knowledge of the dreadfulness of sin, and the goodness and love of God, is among the exercises of the blessed who are preparing for the final vision. Doubtless to the pardoned there are clinging many ‘remnants of sin,’ to clear away every shadow of which will be one work of infinite mercy in the mysterious dwelling-place of the blessed dead.” Martensen, a great authority in theology, writes : “Since no soul leaves this state of being in a fully concluded and finished condition, the middle state must be con-

sidered as a realm of continued development, wherein souls may be prepared, and ripen for the last judgment. Although the (Roman) Catholic doctrine of purgatory is rejected, because it is mixed up with so much that is harsh and false, it contains nevertheless the truth that the intermediate state, in a purely spiritual sense, must be a purgatory determined for the purifying of the soul."

That the spirits of men in Paradise are *with Christ* and have the perfect enjoyment of His presence ; that they are purified till they become more
 Conclusion. and more *like Christ* ; that in this purification there is rest, there is blessedness, that God's mercy continues its cleansing work ; that there is suffering involved, but the blessed suffering that brings peace and consolation to the penitent soul, *not* the bitter suffering of earth—these are the truths alike of scripture and the church. Taught by them we cast into that future life every earnest aspiration ; " we borrow from memory its peaceful retrospect, from conscience its emotions of satisfied duty, from reason its delightful perceptions of truth, from affection and faith the repose of human sympathy and the glow of divine aspiration ; and combining them into one full thought glorified by the element of eternity, we see before us the Paradise of our hopes."

V.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE SAINTS.

I. John 1:7. "We have fellowship one with another."

κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' ἀλλήλων

WHETHER love is eternal, whether the objects of our love are given us for eternity as well as for time, whether the sweet ties of home and of friendship shall be continued in the life beyond the grave, whether there shall be recognition and relationship between the loved ones of earth, whether the fellowship of saints shall be more vivid or more faint, are questions which have never ceased to possess the keenest interest for the children of men; nor will ever cease to be of the most vital importance, as long as human affections remain as they are. It is when we love, but cannot love without fear of loss; when "we cling so passionately to what we must lose so certainly, and may lose so suddenly and so soon; while love continues the most imperious passion, and death the surest fact, of our mingled and marvellous humanity," that the heart has a terrible stake in existence, and questions of the future relationship between ourselves

and the objects of our love have a passionate interest for the tender and loving of earth. The only resource for a man without faith in the future continuance of these relations, is to be also without love. For to stand upon the shore of the ocean of the Present and see treasure after treasure thrown into its insatiable waste, the richest spoils of the heart, and to discern nothing of their future welfare ; to behold all the delights of new and fresh affections, our homes and all their precious contents slipping into the gulf of darkness, without one ray of hope spanning the dreary gloom, is to argue for man a lot less enviable than the beasts of the field, who neither know the delight of loving nor the agony of loss.

Scripture comes to our aid with the assurance that the Communion of Saints grows more strong and real in the life beyond, than in the life before, the grave. “ If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.” This, upon its surface, is the assertion of a *present* fellowship ; but, in its analysis, it states *an undying and an increasing fact*. In proportion as we advance more and more in likeness to Christ, and more increasingly walk in the element of that light in which He is, in that proportion are we cleansed more and more from sin, and light being increased to each and sin being removed, our fellowship with one another grows

Scripture
asserts a
closer com-
munion in
Paradise.

more close and vital. The communion between the living and the living is only one step towards that between the living and the dead ; and this in turn is but a faint horoscope of that communion between the Saints in Paradise. Here evidently are three stages, through which let us trace the ever deepening and ever increasing Fellowship of the Saints.

And, first, *the fellowship we have with one another on earth.* Our affections are the chief

I. The Fellowship of the living.

thing of value about us, and almost the only genuine, certainly the supreme, happiness of men flows from the movement of these affections. Even in an age like ours when wealth and luxury have done much to corrupt the simple source of human happiness, home and friendship still retain their pre-eminent place in the hearts of men. The healthy type of a true home and love still remains with us. There may be many "counterfeit presentments" of home, there may be much that is conventional enforced upon us by the fashion of the time ; but still where the ties of a sincere and refined attachment bind us to the sanctuary where our loved ones are ; "where the sympathies of those who share with us that home have become as the needful light to our daily toil, and the guardian spirits of our nightly rest ; where years have passed on and brought us many a sickness banished by their fidelity, many a danger averted by their counsel, many an anxiety rendered tolerable by their participation ; where often

they, too, have gazed upon us from the bed of pain and threatened to depart, but we have been permitted to rescue them from the grave, and therein have doubled all our tenderness; where from this close inspection of pure hearts, we have learned to think nobly of human nature, and hopefully of the providence of God; where their voices, common enough to other ears, have become to us the natural music of the earth,"—*there* abides the true fellowship of the living and the true happiness of man. Home, mother, wife, child, are words of infinite meaning to the heart: with them are associated the deepest joys life has to give. In communion with them, the burdens of life lose half their bitterness, and the joys of life shine with double lustre. And yet it is no disloyalty to these deepest affections of the soul of man, to say that we know, by many evidences, that they are not on earth in their most perfect and complete form. The converse between loving hearts, full of peace and comfort as it is, is seen in many ways to be only germinal; only at the beginning of that relationship which is destined to grow yet deeper and deeper. In the present life there are secrets in every heart, hidden even from its closest mate. Vails drop down between the fellowship of kindred minds so that

"Not even the dearest heart and next our own,
Knows half the reasons why we smile or sigh."

The body is such a poor interpreter of the soul with-

in; as it smiles or frowns, clasps hands in warmth or coldness, it does not always speak the language of the heart. Years of association with some loved object may make us quick to read its every lineament, yet accustomed as affection is to read the signs upon the familiar dial plate, it is often mistaken and led away by the language of the body:

“ We live together years and years
And leave unsounded still,
Each other's springs of hopes and fears,
Each other's depths of will.
We live together day by day,
And some *chance* look or tone,
Lights up with instantaneous ray
An inner world unknown.”

The poor interpreting power of the body, the poverty of speech and gesture and action to express the fullness of the heart, is one obstacle to perfect communion on earth; the imperfections and sins which cling to and are a necessary condition of souls in a state of progress, is another veil between the spirits of men. We know, as the years pass, and sins and imperfections are done away by the grace of Christ, that misunderstandings grow less, and the communion of hearts grows closer and stronger. The deepening of human fellowship and friendship by the passage of the years; the arrival at that rare and sweet communion where, without the spoken word, spirits understand each other; this close interchange of love

and sympathy, as each shakes off the clogs and imperfections that impeded growth, this is one of the most certain facts, as it is one of the happiest conditions in human life. This points and prophecies of the condition, in which souls growing more pure and holy in themselves, enter more intimately and completely into fellowship with one another. Our human companionship on earth, then, while it is the source of our purest joy, confesses itself incomplete and points to a deeper fellowship that is to be.

Death enters this happy estate, and the home is broken, the family parted, the friendship shivered, and we have now to consider another stage: *the fellowship of the living and the dead*. We cannot dwell together

in the same home without the expectation that its communion so sweet and sacred shall some day be broken ; we know that the pendulum "which at every stroke carries a mortal agony through fifty homes will some hour strike for us a mutual and mortal farewell ;" "the procession of dear events" which has become the constant imagery of our daily life "shall suddenly be arrested by a tomb." All who live in this mortal scene have more than one dear blessing of the heart, parent, wife, or child, who has slipped from the sweet communion of the home on earth to the deeper communion of the home beyond the grave. The eager desire of men in every land has ever asked concerning their welfare ; their sacred books are

mostly the answers men have given to this important question of the human heart. The Christian answer seems most perfect and complete. That it leaves undetermined the time and place of this reunion ; that it tells us it shall be "hereafter," but does not tell us when it shall be ; that it calls it "Paradise," but does not tell us where it is ; that it changes its scenery, from a city with gates of pearl and golden pavements to rural scenes with shady groves and running brooks, does not detract from the power and comfort of the Christian's hope. As one has beautifully said : "Come where and when it may, after years or ages, in the nearest or the furthest regions of God's universe, it passes across our minds the vision of reunion ; it opens a niche in the crypt of the affections where the images of household affection may stand, and gaze with placid look at the homage of our sorrow, till they light up again with life and fall into our arms once more. It matters little at what point in the perspective of the future the separation enforced by death is thought to cease. Faith and love are careless time-keepers ; they have a wide and liberal eye for distance and duration ; and while they can whisper to each other the words, "Meet again," they can watch and toil with wondrous patience, with spirit fresh and true, and, amid its most grievous loneliness, unbereft of one good sympathy."

The Christian answer, although it leaves undeter-

mined so much we crave to know, seems, I say, so perfect and complete.

- It changes the whole trend of our thought.* In recalling our minds from the grave which holds the body, to Paradise which receives the loved one himself, it does away with all idea of any annihilation even for a moment of the conscious soul ; it denies to death all power to cancel life, and reduces it simply to a migration of the soul ; it is, indeed, "God's method of colonization." We can wait for it, therefore, not with passionate hate, as an envious clutch at our happiness from beneath, but with quiet reverence, as a message from above : not "a fiendish hand of darkness" to interrupt a loved fellowship on earth, but a simple suggestion to enjoy that fellowship from a new and richer point of view. *It supplies to us a more vivid fellowship, even though for a time invisible.* It calls us apart for a little while to see the effect of separation. So limited and imperfect is communion through the eye, the ear, the lip, that it separates us for a brief time that we may realize that the richest communion is that commerce of mind with mind, and of heart with heart : that invisible and unconscious communion, by which the higher elements of our nature at last grasp the nobler elements of theirs ; recall and hold commerce with all their thoughts, noble impulses, and grand affections,
1. Changes the whole trend of our thought.
2. Suggests a more intimate fellowship even though invisible.

which were for a time too much obscured by the too obtruding pressure of bodily life. In a word, Death puts both—the living and the dead—in a quiet waiting and preparatory room, for a few years of separation, that both may learn better of each other's inner life, and learning, may be prepared for the perfect fellowship to come later in their reunion. And so, in thinking of those who have been taken from earthly fellowship with us, we shall think truly, only when we think of them and of ourselves as now in spirit and mind-communion.

It substitutes moral and spiritual contiguity for physical. It is true that they have passed from grasp of hand and glance of eye; and this is terrible to the mother who misses the hourly care of her babe, and to the husband bereft of the tender guardianship over his wife; but scripture in many ways tries to wean our thoughts from this physical nearness to a contiguity that may still be ours. While separated from sight, both may be engaged in the same moral and spiritual tasks. By calling the living and the dead "the whole family of God" scripture shows that a true communion still continues; by speaking of Paradise, where imperfect things may enter, and not of heaven, where only the perfect can gain admission, it holds both in the same spiritual plane; by telling us that "they without us shall not be made perfect," spirits *there* and spirits *here* are gathered into

3. Puts
moral and
spiritual
contiguity
for physical.

one great fraternity of souls; "worlds above and worlds below; mansions are they all of the great Father's house;" by calling the spirits in Paradise the "Church Expectant," and *not* the Church Triumphant, it reveals them to be, like ourselves, in the same attitude of waiting. The force of all these suggestions is that the loved ones of Paradise are in moral and spiritual *touch* with us; that they are not transmuted into angels (as some without warrant of scripture allege), and so removed into a new order of being away from all possibility of sympathy; nor are they exalted into perfect and glorified beings *now*, away from all sympathy with us and beyond the grasp of our affection.

Instead of this removal into a new order of being, or exaltation of them in the same order to an infinite height beyond us, *it shows a similar work of sanctifica-*

tion. As beneath the beneficent presence of Christ they grow purified and like Him; their "tears unwept, as it were, before the smile of the Redeemer; their complaints unsung amid the harmonies of Paradise; their sins untwined by the wounding yet healing hand of an angel penitence;" so the hearts of men on earth, by the help of the same Redeemer, by the thought that their eye of love is still upon us, and their voice, "though dead," still speaks in the inner recess of conscience, purify and prepare themselves for the final reunion. "Tell me," says a bereaved heart,"

4. Shows a similar work of sanctification.

“that I shall stand face to face with the sainted dead; and whenever it may be, shall I not desire to be ready, and to meet them with clear eye and spirit unabashed? Shall I not feel that to forget them were a mark of a nature base and infidel?—that under whatever pleasant shelter I may rest, and over whatever wastes I may wander as a wayfarer in life, I must bear their image next my heart; like the exile of old flying with his household gods hidden in his mantle’s secret folds?” It is a comfort to feel that we are engaged in the same moral and spiritual work—that as we persevere on earth in the difficult task of self-conquest, we are rising more and more into the same spiritual atmosphere with them, preparing for the perfect and complete fellowship of Paradise.

Scripture, and on some points, the early Church, bear witness to even more conclusive signs of the communion between earth and Paradise.

5. Reveals their interest and intercession for us. *It speaks of their interest and intercession for us.* “Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses

let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” With a bold figure the apostle sees us toiling in the weary race of life, and above us the ranks of saints, like tier upon tier in an amphitheatre, looking down upon us in our mortal struggles. Since they are the same who helped us in many a critical hour of life, we may be sure that it is no unsympathetic glance they cast upon our affairs. Their

own earthly experience gave them the knowledge with which they can sympathize with those who are below. They, too, have known what doubt, and struggle, and trials, and temptations are; now they are risen above the storm cloud and the fog, rejoicing in the pure light above; they know what it is to suffer, they know what it is to find in Paradise the balm for suffering; this enriches and vivifies and kindles their thought and sympathy toward us. Thus they are not gone—no, not gone. Those who from the Presence of Christ look out on this motley and varied scene of human life—father, mother, husband, wife and child—are within the sound of our voice, the reach of our thought, the grasp of our love; are a thousand times nearer to us during the period of separation than when they lived beneath the same roof with us; for “it is soul-nearness, not bodily propinquity, that makes the heart and kernel of all true fellowship.” If in hours of deep emotion we seem to hear their voice urging us to shun some keen temptation; if at times the voice of Mother seems to fill our hearts with inspiration; if in moments of worldly anxiety the hands of little children seem to draw us back to “innocency of life and constancy of faith;” if the sturdy heroes and battlers for truth in other ages almost seem to lay their hands upon our shoulders, bidding us to be faithful and true, it is not wrong to think so; it is probably true that the succor of invisible hands reaches us in many ways. Surely

they must have changed their character from that which we have known and loved on earth ; the perfected Christian character must have lost its crowning grace and excellence, if the spirits of men in Paradise do not look with interest and with succor upon the struggles of the church militant on earth ! Accordingly the early Church,—basing their belief in the Communion of Saints, on individual scriptures like the cries of the soul under the altar ; alleging that if Dives in Hades could think of and seek to succor his brethren on earth, much more the Saints in Paradise,—taught the interest and intercession of the Church in Paradise for the Church on earth. Thus Origen : “ It will not be out of place to say that all the saints have departed this life, still retaining their love for those who are in the world, concerning themselves for their salvation, and aid them by their prayers and meditation with God.” Thus St. Cyprian : “ Which-ever of us goes hence before the other by the speed of the Divine favor, let our affection continue before the Lord, let not prayer for brothers and sisters cease before the mercy of our Father.” Thus St. Cyril : “ We all of us supplicate thee to the end that God, by their prayers and intercessions, may accept our petition.” The list of witnesses could be indefinitely prolonged, but enough has been quoted to show the belief of the early Church. It will not do to reply, by quoting the example of those who have made of this pious custom an abuse, nor by alleging that the

intercession of the saints interferes with the mediatorial office of Christ ; for it is a sufficient answer to say that, as their prayers and intercessions while living did not detract from that office of Christ, so much less will their interest and endeavor in our behalf now detract from that mediation ; nay, the saints themselves, with their love for their earthly partners may be the very agents employed by the Great Mediator. However remotely or intimately the influence and prayers of the saints may affect us, they at least bear witness to the continuance of sympathy and communion between the living and the dead.

There is another feature of this wider, happier view of the state of the blessed dead ; *it sanctifies the blessed custom of praying for the dead.* It was

6. Sanctifies the custom of praying for the dead. part of the life of the early believers ; part of that comfort which we of later days have lost—to believe that the dead and themselves were bound together by the

closest ties of fellowship and sympathy, and the state of the departed, being one of progressive purity and peace, was a proper subject for their prayers. The Jewish Church had so prayed for centuries ; our Lord and His apostles passed over the custom without condemnation ; taught it, not directly, but rather as an inference from the truth that *death* is not the limit of preparation and purification. And so from the simple words that love and hope inscribed in the

catacombs praying for "peace, light and refreshment" for their departed, to the profound statement of belief contained in all the primitive liturgies:—"O Lord, mighty God, receive this oblation for all godly and righteous fathers who have pleased thee, and for all the dead who have been separated and have departed from us;"—the voice of the early Church ascended for the souls of the departed. *This*—which our natural human affection craves; *this*—which was sanctioned by the primitive Church and is still a part, though slight and almost indiscernible, in the worship of the Church to-day; *this*—which is a witness to us that they have not passed beyond the reach of our affection; this pious custom if it were more universal, would help us to grasp and realize the intimate fellowship that holds between the living and the dead.

VI.

MUTUAL RECOGNITION AND SERVICE.

THUS we think of the blessed dead, entered into the rest of Paradise ; “ their pure hearts jarred no more by the harshness of this oft discordant life ; their earnest minds drinking at the perennial font of truth ; their frailties cast away with the coil of mortality they have left behind ; their sainted love waiting to receive us, as we too one by one pass the dark limits which sever us from their embrace,”

The Fellowship of Paradise. and enter with them the last great fellowship—the truer, deeper fellowship of saints in Paradise. There and then the deepest

longings of the human heart find their satisfaction. The dreadful separation is over ; the period of waiting and preparation has ended ; the vails of misunderstanding are rent asunder ; before us, together and united, await the peace and progress of the skies. As we think of that reunion, how many are the questions that eagerly press upon us. Shall we know each other in Paradise ? Have they in their glorified condition passed beyond us so that we shall fail to recognize in some radiant spirit the loved partner of our

earthly life? Shall we really and certainly know and recognize each other? Shall the dear old relationships of our homes be continued? Shall the mother and child, the husband and wife, the brother and sister, the friend and friend, while united in the bonds of love with all, be still more closely related in affection with each other? Shall these relationships with all of their sweet joy and sympathy and helpfulness be ours still? How often and how eagerly have these questions been asked, and how our answer to them almost takes away the bitterness of death and colors our anticipations of the home beyond the skies.

The course of our thoughts have tended to prove that these relationships will, indeed, be ours—*ours in purer, holier and more lasting form than*

when we were upon earth together. We have seen the obstacles which interfered with perfect fellowship on earth, we have

shown that, with the disappearance of these obstacles this fellowship grew finer and deeper; we have now to see that, as this fellowship takes its last and final form in Paradise, all these ties that bind us to each other, and to the larger circles of humanity, will not only be continued, but will be strengthened and purified. Oh, for our eternal comfort, let us realize that God is good; that whatever treasures of the heart He gives us in life and then takes away, He will at last give back to us, when we are worthy of

the gift, in the most perfect form. Here are the proofs—but better, here are the blessings which are promised to us.

In the fellowship of Paradise there will be *perfect knowledge and recognition of each other*. This is the

question above all other questions upon which the hearts of men in every race rising out of barbarism have craved for certainty. Without this assurance the hope of personal immortality grows pale and dim.

They have asked as they laid away the wasted tabernacles of their loved ones in the grave whether they should know each other in some better state, where misunderstandings and mistakes could no longer cloud their communion with each other, and where there would be no further fear of death and separation. Faint and feeble for the most part, have been the answers of their sacred oracles. But the Christian and Jewish sacred books in the general drift of their teaching, as well as in specific passages vouchsafed to us, have spoken no uncertain answer. David fasted and wept for his child while it was alive that God might spare it, but when it was irrevocably gone, he arose with the unwavering assurance: "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." Moses and Elijah of such vastly different periods appeared in the Transfiguration of Christ, and knew each other and together spoke of the Lord's decease. Dives and Lazarus from such vastly different stations

in life identified and recognized each other in the intermediate state. The Apostle St. John, although seeing only for a moment behind the lifted vail, recognized the four and twenty elders, and the one hundred and forty-four thousand, whose names were written in the book of life. But to pass from the scriptural proofs of mutual recognition, let us ask, how is it possible that there should be conscious life and memory, without knowledge and recognition? How can the whole family of God exist without the mutual knowledge of its members? or a communion of saints without the mutual sympathy and happiness of those united in this sacred solidarity? "Are the children of the Father," one has asked, "to cease to know each other precisely at the moment when they enter into the Father's house?" Nay, it is not too much to say, that the blessedness of Paradise, even the final beatific vision itself—would lose for us their charm, unless our loved ones were sharers with us of that bliss and partakers of that vision. To the loving heart it is impossible to conceive of any life of bliss without those strong affections,—the friendship strong as death, the love stronger than death,—which were the chief blessings of our earthly life. We cannot imagine any of those radiant spirits, in association with whom our character was formed, and from whom life took on most of its worth and value, to be like some brilliant comet, touching our lives for a moment, and then never to cross our path again through all

the cycles of eternity. Moral difference there may be, spiritual growth beyond us there may be, but not such as to necessitate the obliteration of the sweet communion which once was our most precious gift on earth. And so the mass of Christians have always felt that, even if there were no specific declarations of scripture, the same argument that guarantees an immortal life guarantees also an eternal love, and that argument *to them* is *the fact that God is and God is Love*. They have not cared to ask the question, what will be the method of this reunion and recognition. We know little of the condition of spiritual life or of spiritual bodies, and it is useless, if not irreverent, to fabricate any fancies upon the subject; but whatever may be the conditions and environment we know they must be such as to promote, and not to hinder, living and loving communion. Thus viewed, this anxious question should most truly be put in this form: "How should we *not* know each other? when to us that soul has been 'the soul of our soul'—the dearest part and parcel of our being." Through all the manifold forms of expression on earth we have recognized that intimate spirit; a whisper, a voice, a letter, or even what is not written in black and white, what comes out between the lines, have all been sufficient to give us a revelation of the heart within, and even of its variant moods. To suppose that there can be *any* form of embodiment or *any* method of expression that will conceal a "spirit

that has been nearest to our own," and we not able to recognize it under any disguise, is to doubt the powerful instincts of love. "But," says another, "why postulate any disguise at all? If the spirit wear any frame, however ethereal, it must bear some resemblance to the first, since both were the fitting shell of the same soul. When we shall behold the yet lovelier raiment of the same beloved soul, alike in all we loved so fondly, unlike, inasmuch as every token of weakness, pain, age and care will forever have disappeared" we will know it and recognize it at once, without the introduction of angel ministrants.

Satisfied upon this point, the anxious heart goes one step further and asks: "When our spirits meet

again, is there no hope that the relationships of earth will be taken up and renewed?" There have been religions

which taught that the bonds of consanguinity were loosened forever at death, but these have been religions which believed, strange as it seems to us, that such relations were carnal and sinful. The first step of Buddha, in his search for the path of holiness, was the desertion of wife and child. There have not been lacking in the Christian church those like the early gnostics who taught the same unnatural doctrines. But to us who know that Christ consecrated marriage by His presence, and sanctified childhood by His embrace, and restored to widowhood her only son and to parentage its little daughter, and

to sisterhood their only brother, there can be no possible doubt of the sacredness of all human affections and relationships. Relationships founded upon no deep sentiment of the heart may be severed at the grave, but not so the loving ties that circle around every sacred hearthstone. We fathom here only part of the meaning which is contained in those familiar names, father and mother, brother and sister, husband and wife, son and daughter, and we shall make up in eternity that which fell short in our comprehension and enjoyment of them here. This follows from the very nature of the problem. A large part of the character of every human being is formed under the influence of these companionships; our lives, our hearts, our souls, bear the impress of these sacred ties; our spirits become fitted and adapted to these influences as the lock to the key; continued in eternity in identical being, with the same conscious life and memory, our lives would ever be incomplete unless over and above all general affections there were continued these specific affections which are woven in and out with the constitution of our being. Lifted up to its highest spiritual type, there will still be the mutual feeling of mother towards her child, and of child towards its mother, of husband towards his wife, and of wife towards her husband. There are problems which sometimes bewilder the hopes of renewed relationships in another world, like that with which the Sadducees attempted to bewilder our Lord, but

these problems spring from thinking of eternity under the limitations of time. Where all are pure and loving, this much at least we can assert, there can be no conflicting claims of love and friendship. Attachment there shall be, as Mrs. Browning sings, unselfish :

“That love for one, from which there doth not spring
True love for all, is but a worthless thing.”

But the text of our Lord's answer to the Sadducees deserves more extended consideration because it seems, at first sight, to disturb our hope of the renewal of one of the most precious of human ties. The Sadducees came to Him to disprove the doctrine of another life by presenting a problem that seemed to involve the impossibility of continuing the relationships of life, *viz.* the problem of the childless woman and the seven husbands, “Whose wife of them shall she be?” Our Lord's answer in full, given by St. Luke, was : “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage : but they that are accounted worthy to attain that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage : for neither can they die any more : for they are equal unto the angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.” Marriage is the most sacred of earthly relations ; connected with it and dependent upon it are all our most cherished associations ; without it

Luke 20 :
34-36 ex-
plained.

there could be no home and precious ties. If therefore the most sacred of relations is to end at death then no human relationship will continue beyond the grave, and whatever may be the charms of Paradise they will compete at fearful disadvantage with those of earth. If wife and husband, child and parent, friend and friend are never again to be to each other what they have been, if these tender ties are to be swallowed up in the monotony of unspecialized affection, if each is to ascend

“ Aloft, aloft, from terrace to broad terrace evermore,”

but ever farther apart from each other, then our human hearts will have to be greatly changed before they can anticipate such a prospect with acquiescence. Many would be tempted to join the agnostic refusal :

“ You promise heavens free from strife,
Pure truth and perfect change of will ;
But sweet, sweet is this human life,
So sweet I fain would breathe it still ;
Your chilly stars I can forego,
This warm, kind world is all I know.”

But our Lord's words contain no such barren prospect. We must remember the *kind* of marriage, and therefore the kind of relation between man and woman to which his words referred. In those days woman was the property of her husband and passed (as the case mentioned by the Sadducees shows), along with land and title to the heir-at-law. A marriage of convenience of this century, a marriage not based

upon the sentiment of pure affection, is the nearest approach we have to the marriages of that day—the marriages which Christ asserts shall pass away—the marriages of which there shall be no continuance in the world to come. Such unions have no element of perpetuity, even in the beginning, and we may look upon *their* cessation with indifference, nay, with perfect relief to the unfortunate subjects of them. But with us the ideal of marriage presumes the deepening affection and oneness of its subjects, and such true unions, rooted in deep affection, death, no more than man, can put asunder what God hath joined together. Of such our Lord speaks not, save that he implies that these, in contrast with the false relationships, will not be done away in all the spiritual and affectional part of their communion. Nay, if we remember our Lord's custom of using the words "this age" and "that age," "this world" and "that world," *not* to mark the difference between this present world and a future one, but to mark the difference between the world ruled by Him and the world ruled by evil, then we have the thought that His words about marriage relate to the present condition of things in the world; "the sons of this world or age," that is, men and women who follow worldly wisdom and conventionality, "marry and are given in marriage," these business or social contracts are formed: but "they that are accounted worthy to attain that world or age," that is, the men and women among whom the

Christian spirit rules discountenance such mockeries of sacramental union : to them marriage is "the consecrated union of those who love" and is as lasting as the relationships of angels, "for neither can they die any more for they are equal unto the angels." I have explained this passage at length because it seems at first glance to forbid the hope of renewing the most cherished relationship of life, while at heart it declares this union of loving spirits to be "rock rooted amid the mutabilities of time." "Death does not part those thus united ; they are one in Christ and they are one forever ; the seeming separation which death effects is the prelude to a yet more perfect union." And as the greater always includes the less, so with the permanence of this great human relationship will all other relationships of home be permanent in the home beyond the grave. Whatever affections of our hearts have been pure and noble, fervent and self-sacrificing, they may with confidence look forward to the other world as their reward, their resting place and full fruition.

Even this blessed truth of the continuance of our earthly relationships is not all, but of itself yields another truth which is thoroughly concordant with scriptures and suggested in many places. There will be *a ministry of service and helpfulness to each other*. Such, in imperfect form, has been the pleasant privilege of our relationship with each other, as to-

3. Mutual
service
and
helpful-
ness.

gether we worked our way through life. It has been our supremest joy to be of service to each, to do the blessed work of helping, guiding, leading the oft faltering steps, of sympathizing, comforting, lightening the oft burdened heart; the mother has yielded to no weariness, the father has scrupled at no sacrifice, the true friend has counted service a privilege. With the continuance of our relations in Paradise, with the growth of love and with the still remaining need of mutual services, is it not a natural and legitimate conclusion that the occupations of friendship shall continue? that the ministry of love shall not be suspended? that the ability to help shall be greater, and our helpfulness to each other still closer weave the bonds of love? Scripture points this way by precept and example; it shows us the Great High Priest on His mission of mercy to the spirits in prison. It tells us in many ways that we are "workers together with Christ;" "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ,"—heirs together with Him, not certainly only of his glory, but also of His mission;—words which are not confined to time, but also to the work of that other world. And to avoid all possible misconception, three times in the Book of Revelations it is declared that Christ "hath made us kings and priests unto God:" if these be not meaningless titles, they fully declare our ministry and priesthood beyond the grave: for the term "kinghood" suggests the thought of guiding and leading,

and the term "priesthood" is synonymous with the idea of service and sympathy; if those who obtain the first resurrection are to be "kings and priests," then there will be both occasions and objects for the exercise of sympathy and guidance. We cannot think of a Christian relationship without love as its main ingredient, and cannot conceive of love without service and sacrifice as its very heart and core. The lovingness of a nature, its capacity for strong and deep attachments, intensified in Paradise beyond its highest activity on earth, must constitute there, as here, the strongest motive, out of which it moves forth on a ministry of service and sympathy. We cannot doubt that in a state of imperfect conditions, which Paradise represents, there will be opportunity for such a ministry. *On our part*—if the grave has closed between us and one whom we have misconstrued or failed to love as he deserved, that ministry will give us no peace until we have whispered those words "Forgive me," which were unsaid on earth. *On their part*—if some have wronged us, that ministry will not be content until we have vanquished the heart that loved us not, and by love at last won back the grateful gift of love. While with those who loved us, and whom we loved, "we can picture to ourselves that epoch in our progress, through successively loftier and more purified existences, when those who on earth strengthened each other in every temptation, sustained each other under every trial, mingled

smiles at every joy and tears at every sorrow, will, in succeeding varieties of being, hand in hand, heart with heart, thought for thought, penetrate together each new secret, gain each added height, glow with each new rapture, drink in each successive relation," and merge at last into the perfect fellowship of love. But even this perfect sympathy with the loved and good need not end all the energies of our ministry of service. Beyond the circle of the loved and intimate is the vast and varied gathering of all humanity: how little sometimes is the difference between the decline into grievous failure and the ascent into glorious success! How small oftentimes the distinction between the sinner and the saint. Without attempting to touch this great question, which many of the fathers of the Church dwelt upon, the vexed question of Our Lord's mission to the dead—surely we, who feel the burden common to all humanity, who know how the grace of God is missed by so many, who feel the yearnings of a fraternal heart towards who "have missed the way," surely we may believe some span of sympathy and service will reach even to wandering guilt. We may at least cherish the hope, from the divine example of Christ, that "the loving soul will be sent to bind up the brokenhearted; and the serene soul to breathe peace to the cumbered, the harassed, and the wayworn; and the fiery soul to do loyal battle with the powers of evil."

With this thought we close the circle of the fellow-

ship of Saints in Paradise. Soon for us the work of earthly life will be over; soon for us the note of worldly anxiety will cease, and we, too, shall join the "emancipated brotherhood of the departed." Let us comfort our grief with the hopes of this blessed reunion, and live the life of faithful service that we may be made "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

VII.

SPIRITUAL BODIES.

1 Cor. 15:49. "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

φορέσομεν καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ ἐπουρανίου

IT must be admitted, without hesitation, that we have no data, apart from scripture, upon which to form any conception of the spiritual body. Upon this subject it is convincingly true that
Scripture the only authority. "the natural man perceiveth not the things of God," and even the discernment of the spiritual man hardly reaches to more than the fact that we have a spiritual body. What shall be its form or whether it shall have any form; what its organs and their functions or whether it shall have any organs; what its relation to the present body, or whether it shall have any relation; what shall be its method and manner of expression: are questions upon which we can form no clear conception. But the inability which adheres to the comprehension of the spiritual body is, after all, only the same ignorance that attaches to all the constituent elements of our being, and in no way affects the faith or hope of the

Christian. What is the natural body? The chemist can tell you of its elements, but he cannot weave a shred of its fair texture or recompose a drop of its vital blood. What is life? The biologist can show you the method of its action, but he cannot touch with his scalpel the "mysterious seat of life's retreat," or the narrow cell where thought resides. What is spirit? The theologian can mark its symptoms and define its fruits, but he cannot tell you the secrets of its being. What is the spiritual body? The same plea of ignorance must be entered: but let not this disturb the fact of our faith nor the ground of our consolation in the truths concerning our spiritual embodiment which Christ has revealed.

If we would arrange our thoughts in proper order, we must begin with St. Paul's clear enunciation: "There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body." As there are various kinds of flesh on earth,

men, beasts, birds, and fishes; as there

are variant glories in the heavens above, sun, moon, and differing stars: so there is a difference and classification among bodies

—terrestrial, celestial, natural and spiritual.

Here are four kinds which probably enter into two classes: the terrestrial bodies which are also natural (*ψυχικόν*); and the celestial which are also spiritual (*πνευματικόν*.) They stand in two categories; they are contrasted with each other; their particular properties are brought out by contrast; they cannot

possibly be the same, nor the varieties of the same. Man has the gift of both ; so to speak, he is—in the Apostle's conception—double-bodied ; he has a natural embodiment and a spiritual embodiment : he is clothed and apparelled naturally and spiritually. It is no more wonderful that “there should be a body fitted to the capacities and wants of man's highest part, his spirit, than there should be one fitted to the capacities and wants of his subordinate lower nature.” Nay rather it is comforting to think that as the natural body fades and decays, we shall have the possession of another, a spiritual body. And this is the first truth, in thinking of our future condition, which we must realize and hold fast,—a source of consolation often overlooked,—a truth St. Paul so forcibly declares in his great argument on the resurrection, that that “was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural ; and afterward, that which is spiritual.”

The Apostle throws into broad contrast the distinguishing features of the natural body and the spiritual. There is in Christianity none of that spirit of gnosticism which, looking upon matter as essentially evil, has striven to throw contempt upon the body. On the contrary, it has always had high honor paid to it. It is the temple of the Holy Ghost. It is the tabernacle of the immortal spirit. It is the shrine of the soul. By our affections we have counted it part of the personality of our loved

2. The distinguishing features of the natural and spiritual bodies.

ones. We study it as the expressive dial-plate of the life within ; we have watched it in health with joy ; we have waited upon it in sickness with tenderness ; in death we lay it away and care for its resting place with reverent grief. It is, it must be, ever dear to us, as the shrine of so many cherished associations. We can only tear our hearts away from it by the promise of another body—its counterpart, like it yet so much higher—the spiritual body. And yet as age draws near, and disease works to its consummation, this body of earth so truly fulfills the Apostle's words ; “It is sown in *corruption*” ;—the laws of nature work, the power that binds its atoms together is loosened, and under the unvarying force of chemical reaction it sinks into a state of corruption. “It is sown in *dishonor*” ;—whatever beauty may have marked its earthly form, whatever strength thrilled through its muscles, whatever grace characterized its every movement, in the grave it lies dishonored. “It is sown in *weakness*” ;—in life it may have towered above its fellows in manly strength, every muscle hard and flexible, every nerve strong and healthy, every organ filled with abounding vitality, stretched upon its death bed it is the type of all weakness and powerlessness. How can we stand this awful but certain fate of an object so dear and venerated, unless on the rebound there flashes before our minds the thought of a body, which, as it is slowly raised within us, growing invisibly like a fairy tabernacle

“not made with hands,” building up more quickly than a coral structure, fit to be the pure and permanent habitation of an immortal spirit, is reared and raised—*not* in corruption, but in incorruption; *not* in dishonor, but in glory; *not* in weakness, but in power. Only as we believe, and realize the hope of such a body, can we let loose the grasp of reverent affection upon the earthly tabernacles which have shrined the spirits of our relatives and friends: else, with the Romanist we will reverence and worship the relics of the saints departed; or with the Protestant, will sadly stand by the grave side and meditate upon the day when the four winds of heaven will bring together their stolen treasures, and the body of the earthly life shall be recomposed. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.” Buried bodies are “flesh and blood”; by their very nature they are corruptible and perishable; save for their temporary association with those who for a while have used them, they have nothing in common with the spiritual body which they helped to prepare for and by which they will be replaced. On the other hand, spiritual bodies are heavenly in their origin and have nothing that is subject to corruption and dissolution; nothing in common with the grave, into which they neither can enter nor from which come back again. Such is the distinction between the natural and the spiritual body.

Having clearly realized that we possess these two

bodies, let us next see when the spiritual body shall be ours. In one place the apostle speaks as if it were a *present* possession. "There *is* (*εστι*) a natural body and there *is* (*εστι*) a spiritual body"—as if both were in our present possession: in another place he speaks as if it were in store for us: "And as we have borne the image of the earthly we *shall* also bear the image of the heavenly"—as if it were to be a future gift. There is nothing contradictory, as we shall see, in these two statements. They simply denote different stages in the development of the spiritual body. He gives us an analogy which contains the whole truth. "And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but bare (naked) grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other kind." The sowing and resurrection of the grain is the analogy, then, which we have to study. If we study it carefully it will tell us what we desire to know concerning the development of the spiritual body. Study a grain of wheat: beneath the same husk is a bulk of nutritious and albuminous matter, and at its base a tiny germ or embryo: the bulk of matter is the granary on which the tiny plantlet feeds, the tiny plantlet is endowed with vitality and feeding upon the store-house, shoots up into life. Place the seed in the ground, the dews moisten it, the heat warms it, the chemistry of the soil quickens it, and the germlet for days and nights is unseen, for it is feeding

upon the bulk of nutritious matter, but when it has grown strong by this nutriment, the germ casts off the husk, which dies and is known no more—the outer integument becomes only a portion of the soil, but the now strong and nourished germ breaks away from all confinement, shoots up in the sunshine and air with quickened life, assuming that “own body as it hath pleased Him,” and finally reaches its perfect type and fulfills its destiny. So it is with the grain of wheat; now St. Paul uses it as an analogy; but of what is it an analogy? I think that most of us, until it was pointed out by an excellent scholar (Dr. Goodhart) considered that sowing the *live* seed in the ground was like sowing the *dead* body in the grave: we thus lost the force and fitness of the comparison; the shelving off the *husk* of the seed at the point where the sprout shoots forth into life is like laying off the natural body in the grave, there the resemblance is complete, but in no other particular. The seed with life in it going on at once to better growth is not at all like the dead body with no life in it, going on to dissolution. Where then is the analogy? How shall we find the force and beauty of the Apostle’s comparison? How shall we learn the sacred lesson he designs to teach us? Ah, this is the true analogy,—the sowing and growth of the seed in the ground is like *the planting and development in the soil of the world of the entire man.*

In this view it is almost a perfect comparison.

Beneath man's one apparent form there is the bulk of his nature, his material nature, and there is the spiritual germ, and it stands to the latter as the albumen to the embryo in the grain ; it is subservient to it ; it is the matter out of which he gains and trains his spiritual nature. The soil of the world and of experience does for him what the soil of the earth does for the plant : unseen influences wait upon him, the warmth and air he needs he finds in the love of God ; the Divine Spirit is to his spiritual growth as the dews and sunshine of heaven are to the growing plant. And if there had been no interruption by sin in the case of the man, as there was none in the case of the plant, the analogy would have been complete : man would have gone from stage to stage in his development ; the subordinate nature would have slowly yielded to his spiritual ; the spirit would have grown strong ; the spiritual body would have slowly developed ; death would have come, only as the dropping off of his natural body, as the growing plantlet sheds the husk of the seed into dissolution ; and with quickened life, man, the perfect man, in body and spirit, would have risen to his consummation. But now because sin has *misplaced* man from his proper order, we have had terrible ideas of death and false ideas of the resurrection ; of death, because we fail to see that it is only the shedding of the natural body, as the seed sheds its integument, in order to reach fuller development : of the resurrection, because we fail to

realize that throughout our life we are rising from the dead, as we subordinate, and use our lower material nature, as the embryo feeds on the granary of stored-up nutriment.

It will help us to realize these truths if we notice how this process took place in Christ. No one, I think, will say that the "sowing time" of

4. The example of Christ.

the "seed of the woman," which was to crush the head of all evil, was at the burial of Christ, when His body was placed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, but was at the birth of Christ, when God planted it in the soil of the world. Born into the form of man, that form held the double nature shared by all humanity; the material nature that came through the long line of His genealogy, given by St. Luke, and the spiritual; all the elements, in a word, of perfect humanity; but how great was the difference in His development. The natural body increased in stature, grew and changed like the bodies of men; but all the time, owing to His perfect sinlessness, the spiritual was utilizing and turning to its use, all the experiences which came through His fleshly body: was assimilating, so to speak, all the food-supply of His earthly experience. He was "rising from the dead" all through His life, with every temptation He overcame, and with every weakness He subdued: His spiritual body was slowly being fashioned. At times it burst through the translucent covering of the earthly

body, as when He was transfigured on the Mount of Transfiguration, or as the celestial radiance broke through in the garden so that the multitude fell down before His supernal brightness, or when He slipped like impalpable ether through the hands that sought to throw Him from the brow of the hill of Nazareth. "As it was, when He tasted death upon the cross there was but little left for Him to lay aside, and the final change was in process of completion when He appeared to His disciples after His resurrection:" these appearances in method and manner were beyond all laws that govern the movements of the natural body, so we believe it was our Lord's spiritual body, which men saw and handled, but not yet in its perfect form, in all the splendor and loveliness it shall wear, after He leaves the earth of His humiliation and ascends to "the glory He had with the Father before the world was." And we, as we conform our lives to the example of Christ, rise with Him (as scripture declares of us) all through our life from sin and evil, daily dying unto sin and daily rising unto righteousness,—we, too, are thereby developing our spiritual lives and fashioning our spiritual bodies. The same author, who has led us to the true interpretation of the analogy of the seed with the life of man, closes a very strong argument with these words:—"In any case, if St. Paul's analogy be valid, we are forming our spiritual bodies *now*; they are precisely fitted to the growth which has produced them, and

when manifested, they must manifest the character of their owners. St. Paul does not encourage the belief that we shall ever at any time be bodiless existences ; rather he would seem to imply that, as the old body falls away, we shall realize the possession of the new which has been forming all along though unseen by us." To say nothing of the impossibility of conceiving of a spiritual life expressing itself without embodiment and without organs, it gives the heart, instead of a blank and dreary waiting for a far off resurrection, the immediate possession of a satisfactory fact ; the spirits of the departed, absent, indeed, from the body of earth, but clothed, instead, with the body that is from above.

What, then, are we to think of the "day of resurrection," of which the Bible in certain places speaks ?

5. The final stage : wearing the image of the heavenly. Here is the place to unfold St. Paul's other statement : " We shall also bear the image of the heavenly." In many different ways and forms of statement scripture affirms a

day in which there shall be a general resurrection of the dead. The statement as given by our Lord in St. John's Gospel is : " The hour cometh in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." This declares another form of resurrection from that resurrection from the dead that has been taking place all through life ; but there is

no discrepancy. The spiritual body at that day or hour shall assume its perfect and completed form: the spiritual body which now is, and is now fashioning, shall then wear "the image of the heavenly." There is a time when the *spirit* of man shall be *like Christ*; so at that time, the *spiritual body* of man, also shall be *like* the body of Christ's glory. The likeness to Christ shall be complete in every part. "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto Himself." "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Words cannot tell us what is the glory of Christ's body—what shall be the glory of ours; the most eloquent words fail to tell us what shall be that "image of the heavenly," which we shall finally wear. If we turn to His body after the resurrection from Joseph's tomb, it had about it a glory and a loveliness so that even His familiar friends did not at once recognize the Lord's body. It transcended all the laws of matter. It was free from all the limitations of earth. But even this was not the full glory of our Lord's body—its heavenly glory would have been too blinding for mortal eyes. But whatever shall be its supernal brightness, we are told that our spiritual bodies shall be like it in all the splendor of its heavenly condition.

We will lose ourselves in mystery if we pry into

the unsearchable things of God ; we may not know,
we cannot tell, the supernal beauty of His

6. Like glorified body, and of ours conformed unto
and Its image ; but this at least we may know,
unlike the body of to the heart's infinite comfort : *it shall be*
earth. *both like and unlike the old familiar body*

of earth. The spiritual body shall be like the natural. The Body of our Lord's Resurrection resembled His earthly form, for through the cloud of glory and mystery that surrounded it, the apostles soon recognized the dear, familiar marks. And so with us : the longing heart will not search long in Paradise for the loved, familiar form ; through the cloud of beauty and immortality that encircles it, the friend on earth will soon find its mate ; glorified and purified as the bodies of the saints shall be, they are not changed beyond the easy power of recognition. For we must remember that the spirit to a large extent fashions, forms, and marks the bodies of men ; the soul is the architect of the shrine ; and thus, the spirit and personality remaining the same in its essential life, only purified and perfected, the spiritual body shall be its perfect expression and *must* resemble the dear, loved form of earth. But, on the other side, the spiritual body shall be unlike the natural—*unlike* it in all the elements of its weakness, pain, and disease. We complain that we can form no clear conception of a spiritual body, that it leaves no image on the *retina* of the mind. Try to grasp an image by this process,

a sure and certain process, by denying to the spiritual body, all that limits, defaces, and deforms our earthly bodies. No pain with burning feet shall dance along the unstrung nerves; no hidden sorrow pale the color from shrunken cheek; no grief force unbidden tears from weeping eyes. This body, oh! how often, with its appetites and passions, has it been the minister of all intemperance. How often has it received back in aching brow and quivering nerves; in disease slowly entering and paralyzing its various organs, the penalty of deeds done in the flesh. How often has it been upon the bed of pain and sickness, how many times has fever flushed, gunpowder consumed, and fracture mutilated it. And even when untouched by disease, how frequently has it stood as a veil between loved and loving spirits; how the outer man flashing from eye, smiling from lip, wrinkling on brow, and grasping with hand, has been a false indicator of the soul within. Yes, so runs the indictment against this "body of our humiliation;" with its thick walls and heavy guards at every outlet, it has often kept apart the dearest spirits from sweet communion of heart with heart: it has made false entries on the dial-plate without, and loving spirits have read them wrongly. But in that other life the perfect knowledge of each other, and therefore, the deeper sympathy of love, will not be left to any "chance look or tone." For the body that we shall wear, whatever else it may be, shall be at least the perfect expression of the spirit.

We may not know much of that glorified condition, but what a world of comfort is contained in the thought that, through a perfect medium of communication, we shall know each other's deeper life ;—a knowledge, compared with which the knowledge we have now, of each other's spirits is looking through a glass darkly. Conceive of such blessedness, if you will ; then conceive of a body, out of which have passed all the surging waves of appetite, all the domination of fierce and cruel passions ; then conceive of a body, from which no tear shall ever fall, on which no care shall ever leave its mark, in which no pain and suffering shall ever have a hold ; and you will have, so far as negatives can supply, a faint conception of the spiritual body, which now is fashioning, which, then, when perfected, shall wear the glorified image of the heavenly Christ.

VIII.

HEAVEN.

I. Cor. 2:9. "The things which God hath prepared for them
that love Him."

ὃ ἡτοιμάσεν ὁ Θεὸς τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν

THE completed man, like Christ in body and spirit, stands ready for his final estate; to enter upon and to enjoy "the good things which God hath prepared for those who love Him." A multitude of questions, which it is difficult to repress, rush upon the eager heart. How long shall Paradise continue? When shall the intermediate state issue in the final condition of the saints? When shall the church expectant become the church triumphant? What shall be the scenery of heaven—a brilliant city with gates of pearl, or a sylvan scene with shady trees and flowing rivers? What shall be its occupations—the ceaseless round of praise and adoration, or the progress and activities of immortal souls? All such questions—

"Poor fragments all of this low earth,
Such as in dreams could hardly soothe
A soul that once had tasted of immortal truth,"

How about your own?

{ we brush aside with their answers, as only rash guesses of an irreverent imagination. Let ours be the simpler task to inquire, from abundant scriptures, what shall be the peace and progress of our heavenly life.

Peace is the absence of all discordant elements ;
the peace of heaven rests upon the fact
that there shall be no longer any of the
elements which have harassed and dis-
tressed our earthly lives :

The peace
of heaven,
absence of
harassing
causes.

“Peace is God’s direct assurance
To the souls that win release
From this world of hard endurance,
Peace, he tells us, only peace.”

Peace has never been, nor is it possible that it should be, the atmosphere of human life. All life is friction. Not a single faculty works unimpeded to its end, nor do all our faculties work harmoniously together. But a peace which passeth our present comprehension is “God’s direct assurance” to those who win heaven. There shall be an entire absence of all distressing causes.

“*There shall be no more curse*” (καταναθέμα). A curse is a blight ; that upon which it falls no longer fulfills its function. A curse early fell upon creation so that it no longer worked peacefully to its end ; the whole creation and every creature came under the spell ; in St. Paul’s language, “the whole creation groaneth

1. No
more
curse.

and travaileth in pain together until now." This is a different picture from that which God looked upon when He saw and pronounced that "everything was very good." Looking at many scenes in creation, they shock and puzzle our sense of justice and right. We try to think that "love is creation's final law—though nature, red in tooth and claw, with ravine, shrieks against the creed." But all the blighting effects of the curse, all the travail pains of nature, all the friction of misplaced functions, shall cease in the heavenly life: "there shall be no more curse." *And there shall be no more sin.* "There shall in no wise

enter into it anything that defileth, neither
 2. No whatsoever worketh abomination, or mak-
 more eth a lie." This thought itself is perfect
 sin.

bliss. Sin is the great, properly speaking, the only evil of life; it stands as the root of every evil. Its punishment to the coarse, its remorse to the sensitive soul, is the spectre which haunts human life. To be the heirs of a condition, where there shall be no more sin; a state of being where absolute sinlessness shall reign between man and his Maker, and between man and man; a condition in which perfect holiness shall characterize every motive and deed, and there shall be no need of concealment, for there shall be nothing to conceal; such a promise is to us the pledge of complete blessedness. "*And there shall be no night (νύξ) there.*" Night as the symbol of mental and moral darkness, doubt on truth and dark-

ness on duty, this double obscuration overshadows many an earnest mind. To hate prejudice and to love the truth, to want to leave the darkness and to find the truth; to be anxious to know the right and to do it, yet to discover both paths involved in doubt, and in our most solemn hours to have the ugly face of skepticism intrude itself, surely these experiences are known to every earnest mind. But in heaven the darkness shall lift at last; truth and duty shall lie before us fully illumined, for "the Lord God giveth them light." To seek truth shall still be our mission, but it will be a search unharassed by haunting skepticism, and to love duty shall continue our service, but it will be a service untinged by selfishness.

The promise runs on into other clauses: the absence of other evils, which are the consequences of the causes gone before. "There shall be no more sorrow (*πένθος*), nor crying (*κρηνγή*), neither shall be any more pain" (*πόνος*). We must remember the words used have been carefully chosen by St. John. The first two words express the grief that is the accompaniment of bereaved affections and mourning hearts; the last word is the pain associated with unrequited toil and with life's many deeds of injustice. Life is full of both these evils, bereavement and injustice. We *must* weep; even the Son of God could invite to tears, when He bade the daughters of Jeru-

saalem, "Weep for yourselves and your children." So keenly did He feel the reality of human grief; so tenderly did He bow in reverence before the emotions of every melted heart, that Himself wept before the grave of Lazarus, and taught that "human sorrow was no sin." And so with toil and the many deeds of injustice that are done upon the surface of this green earth and beneath the light of every day's smiling sun; these are pain and torment to us. "Health and disease," it has been truly said, "honor and ignominy, wealth and poverty, everything we can name in the way of external good and evil, come to us more often by the virtue and vice of our parents and neighbors than by any merit and demerit of our own." It is no unmerited tirade against our high and noble civilization to say that in many places, "the earth is still full of violence and cruel habitations." Tell us that there is no justice to be done here or hereafter, that "wrong and tyranny shall be finally triumphant, and goodness and heroism ultimately defeated, and lo, there surges up from the very depths of souls, so high and stern remonstrance, which should make the hollow heavens resound with our indignation and our rebellion." But the Christian is hopefully led away from the agony of such thoughts by the promise that justice shall ultimately be done, sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and God's own hands shall wipe away every tear.

The promise runs up to its consummation in the

clause: "*And there shall be no more death*" (θάνατος).

5. No Death, which in every race and in every
more age of the world has been looked upon as
death. the great destroyer; death, which to the

Christian has been softened down, but is still the synonym for separation, exile from loved ones, and the exchange of the familiar and dear for the unknown; death, which hangs insensibly suspended over every life we cherish, as the very life of our life, which stands ahead of us, as the great experience of our manhood and the supreme test of our religion; death, which so blinds our eyes with tears at the moment of its apparent triumph that we cannot see the heavenly hope nor grasp it with a vivid hand; shall be no more, shall haunt us no more with its evil dread, shall henceforth give us no single pang of anguish: it is done with, discharged, destroyed, when we enter upon the heavenly life.

All these elements which have harassed and pained and made human life a misery shall exist no more in heaven; every single evil, the curse, sin, doubt, sorrow, crying, tears and death, gain no admittance there. With them Peace then, the atmosphere of heaven. passes away the whole brood of their unhappy consequences. We shall never again feel a single throb of unhappiness. The ideal of God for humanity shall at last be realized. Man at last shall become Christ-like. Whatever awaits

him in his heavenly home, he shall at least work in an atmosphere of peace,

“To this life’s inquiring traveller
Peace of knowledge of all good;
To the anxious truth unraveller,
Peace of wisdom understood.

“To the ruler, sense of action,
Working out his great intent;
To the prophet, satisfaction
In the mission he was sent.”

We are now assured of the *peace* that shall constitute the element of our heavenly life; but there is another half to our inquiry which we may legitimately seek. The scripture assures us that we shall know no further evil in our Father’s home; although we cannot comprehend the supreme bliss of an estate which shall be without the distractions of earth, yet we believe, and comfort our hearts with this divine assurance of peace; but we ask, “Is there to be no progress in heaven? Are its joys and beatitudes as stereotyped and monotonous as they have frequently been delineated? Are the ‘many mansions of our Father’s house’ to afford but one type of bliss, but one form of activity, that of ceaseless worship and adoration?” It must be admitted that the delineation of the joys of heaven has often been unattractive, and as a result, the promises of heaven have operated only partially and languidly on our present feelings. Al-

II. Is
there
progress
in heaven?

most all men believe in a life to come; only a few men live as if that life were a reality. And when we come to unravel this strange inconsistency, why promises so exceedingly great move men so slightly, why such an "exceeding weight of glory" weighs so impalpably upon men's lives and conduct, the answer is, partly, at least, that the heavenly life has been presented as an unvarying sequence of praise and ado-

<p>1. Praise and adoration in heaven.</p>	<p>ration. To praise and worship God, when we come to the joy and fullness of the beatific vision, would seem to be the natural service of the redeemed; it is presented in the Book of Revelations as the joyful service of men and angels. Before His throne fall down the four and twenty elders: the spirits of men and of angels join in the heavenly trisagion, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty which was, and is, and is to come." The voice of praise must flow unceasingly from the hearts of men redeemed and purified by the blood of the Lamb that was slain; and "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth" must forever ascribe "Blessing and honor and glory and power unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." It would seem to be the simple movement of the great heart of redeemed humanity.</p>
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But there are other scriptures besides the Apocalypse, and these leave no doubt upon our minds that the life of heaven is varied and progressive. Nay,

even apart from scripture, variety in our immortal life would seem to be easily deduced from the facts of earth. Truly has it been said, "Men in this life exhibit *infinite varieties* of craving, character and capacity; and all this within the limits of virtuous desire and of righteous effort. We see individuals here, differing from each other in almost every taste and sentiment, in the characters they especially admire, in the objects they most strenuously aim at—of whom, nevertheless, we cannot pronounce that one is a more faithful servant of duty, or likely to be more acceptable to God than another. There are good men of every phase and peculiarity of goodness; there are ardent and unwearied 'fellow-laborers with God' in every corner of the vineyard, in all the countless departments of His infinitely varied husbandry. There are those whom God sanctifies for the patient endurance of His heaviest will. There are those whom He softens and purifies that they may radiate love and serenity around them. There are those, finally, whom He has set apart to glorify and serve Him by the discovery of truth and the diffusion of knowledge. If, then, we are to preserve our essential identity in that other world, it follows that with a purged vision and a spiritualized being, discrepancies of aim and character be corrected, but the essential trend of character will remain the same." The active and energetic spirit shall find scope for its energy;

2. Variety
argued
from
natural
grounds.

the earnest inquirer after truth shall have the limitless future for his field of search; the soul whose life on earth was love shall have the boundless realms of heaven for the exercise of its affections. But this so precious a truth is not merely a matter of human reasoning. Scripture, as I have said, furnishes abundant proof of this varied and progressive life. It shows us that "the many mansions in the Father's house" are many, not only in number, but also in variety; and the variety is as great as the individuals, for there is "a place prepared for each."

The passage which we select to guide our thoughts are the well-known words of St. Paul: "And now

3. Progress
proved
from
I Cor.
13:13. abideth faith, hope, and love, these three;
but the greatest of these is love." In this
chapter the Apostle contrasts *the life that*
now is with the life that is to be. He does

full justice to the things of earth; he summons its brightest gifts of intellect, the genius that conceives and the eloquence that utters; he summons its highest religious attainments, the faith that gives its body to be burned and the love that gives its goods to feed the poor; and insists that these qualities must be informed by love, to reach their highest state. After he has passed in review all the highest endowments of our race, he suddenly stops and speaks as though all were but elements of an imperfect condition. The sight is "through a glass darkly;" the knowledge is of "things we know" and

in part ; the whole present life is to the future life as a child's "speech, thought, and feeling," but there comes a manhood's period ; the *now* is contrasted with the *then*, and the one is to the other as the child is to the man. The partial, incomplete and fragmentary elements of an imperfect dispensation shall pass away ; and in its place shall come the completeness and fullness of a new dispensation ; for the imperfect knowledge now enjoyed shall come the perfect knowledge, "fully knowing as we are fully known ;" in the place of the halting, hesitating faith, hope, and love of earth, there shall remain and continue to develop, the deepening faith, the enlarging hope, and the accrescent love of heaven. Thus the passage clearly reveals the progress and growth of our divinest faculties in heaven.

What a wide horoscope is given us, as we think of *knowledge* in heaven ; the time when we shall "fully know" (*ἐπιγνώσομαι*). Here we have "fully known" not even a single object ; *not* 4. Progress of knowledge. Nature, whose manifold pages we have been scarcely able to decipher ; *not* Creation, whose footnotes have surpassed our comprehension ; *not* Man, the depths of whose intricate being we have barely sounded ; *not* "the dearest soul and next our own," whose heights of pure affection we have scarcely climbed ; *not* Christ, in all the meekness and majesty of His life, in all the perfection of his human, in all the grandeur of His

divine nature; *not* God, in all the harmony of His attributes, in all the equity of His justice, in all the unutterableness of His love, whose ways we have never been able to penetrate, whose thoughts we have never been large enough to think. But *there* how vast and varied will be the objects of our knowledge. “*There* will be before us inviting our research, and feeding it with fresh results through immortal ages, not only our earth but the system to which it belongs, and the systems which lie beyond. There will be the secrets of time as well as those of space for us to learn; the footsteps of the eternal in all worlds during those immeasurable epochs of the past, which geology and astronomy dimly agree to indicate; the existences, the evolutions, the tragedies and the redemptions which now we can barely and dimly conjecture, but which then will form the feast and pasture of our daily life.” Apart from creation there will be Christ to know, in all the hidden recesses of His human life, the hours of His temptation and trial, the hours of His heroism and grandeur, the hours of His bloody cross and passion; and there will be the illimitable Fatherhood of God, accessible to us through the Son and by the Spirit, not “in the fathomless abysses of His glory,” but in the sweetness and harmony of all His attitudes. Yes, knowledge will be there, and will be ample, for all the wise and searching of the world.

Faith shall abide. It has been a wrong interpreta-

tation of this passage to say that faith and hope shall cease, because faith passes into sight and hope into fruition. Nay, faith *abides*, not ceases, the apostle writes. All through life, to preserve our faith intact, ever growing deeper and leaving behind only its prejudices, has been the struggle of thousands of pious and perplexed inquirers after truth; to pierce the many problems of our existence which cast a midnight gloom over many a weary space of life; to understand some explanation of the many unsolved questions of human suffering; to do this, amid baffling and disheartening facts, and remain unshaken in fidelity and truth; to preserve our trust in God's goodness and in each other, amid much that bore no solution which we could find, this has been the hard task assigned to faith. The heavenly world breaks upon us, and faith passes into it, no longer to be distressed and shaken from its base, but as the perfect trust, the ever deepening trust in our Father and in the great brotherhood of souls: all the dark clouds gathered over the earth, where confidence is so often misplaced, and where man comes to live, if not in open distrust, yet in secret suspicion, of his brother, and of his Maker, shall roll away from that heavenly city, where God abides and man abides and perfect trust, which is the final form of faith, shall be the atmosphere of life.

And hope abides, as an element in the other life. Not the hope of earth, which is so buoyant in early

days, but so passive in later life ; not the hope which
 “so often deferred maketh the heart sick,”

6. Progress of hope. and so often disappointed, maketh the
 soul to ask, “Who will show us any good?”

Hope, in that other world, will be an ever buoyant faculty, which, gratified in every holy desire, with eager expectation will look forward to new fruitions. God is Infinite, beyond the power of the finite to exhaust His gifts : there will always be some new revelation of His goodness to expect, some new delight of His love to enjoy, some new truth of His exhaustless Being to learn. Nay, the one thing that ever satisfies, that never wearies is goodness ; it is ever fresh ; contains new surprises at every moment ; affords new fruition in every hour of its possession. There can be no satiety in any form of goodness. To the hopeful spirits of heaven God will “fulfill Himself in many ways,” and every fulfillment will be an inexhaustible satisfaction. A world full of new expectations, of new fruitions ; a world of pure and holy hopes, and a world without disappointments ; such will be the world we shall enter when God calls us to His presence.

And finally *love continues to abide*, and as the greatest of all virtues. To the great majority of human beings the progress of
 7. Progress of love. love is the “*great* good thing which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

Without it knowledge would be unsatisfactory, faith

would be dim, and hope would be drear. Love is the essential nature of God, and must, therefore, become the essential character of those who mingle about His throne. "Heaven," one has eloquently said, "would seem to be in some especial manner their rightful inheritance: love is so infinite, and its earthly horizon so bounded, its earthly development so imperfect, its earthly catastrophes so sad; its undying tenacity, its profound tenderness, and its boundless yearnings seem so incongruous, as contrasted with its frail objects, and its poor performances, and its momentary life. There are those, and the denizens of our anticipated world may consist of them in overwhelming proportion, of whose nature affection has been the mainspring, the strength, the sunbeam, the beauty, whose heart has been their chiefest treasure; to whom fame, ambition, power, success, have been at best only the casual and outside objects of existence; who, in a word, lived on love. Generation after generation, age after age, through the countless cycles of the past, human creatures have linked themselves together, never dreaming that their connection was limited by time, or that their ties would be severed by the Great Destroyer, and have consigned the husk and framework of their cherished companions to the dust, never doubting that these comrades watched over them from the spiritual world, and were waiting to receive them when the years were ripe. Millions in all times have walked courageously into the great

darkness, satisfied that they were going to rejoin the company of those whose places had been long "left void in their earthly homes," and, after long yearnings, to satisfy again "the mighty hunger of the heart in the fullness of eternal joy." And when these ties were once taken up again in heaven, it would be without the shadow of any future separation; but, in an atmosphere charged with love divine, they would only deepen and grow more indissoluble with the progress of eternity.

Here we bring our studies to a close. We have endeavored, following only the words of the sacred

narrative, to make more real to the sorrow-
Conclusion. ing and afflicted, the Christian interpreta-
tion of Death, of Paradise, and of Heaven.

There are "great and precious promises," indeed, which are given us in Christ. Their vast reality will far exceed our feeble and imperfect human comprehension. For when all has been said, it still remains true, "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for those who love Him." We shall best gain some faint inkling of their undiscoverable preciousness by living now, as is, indeed, our most priceless privilege, the heavenly life.

We can best realize the heaven that is to be by living in it; by forcing ourselves to remember, amid the distractions of the world, that we are "citizens of no mean country;" by recalling the precious fact that "our citizenship is in Heaven,"

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: August 2005

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